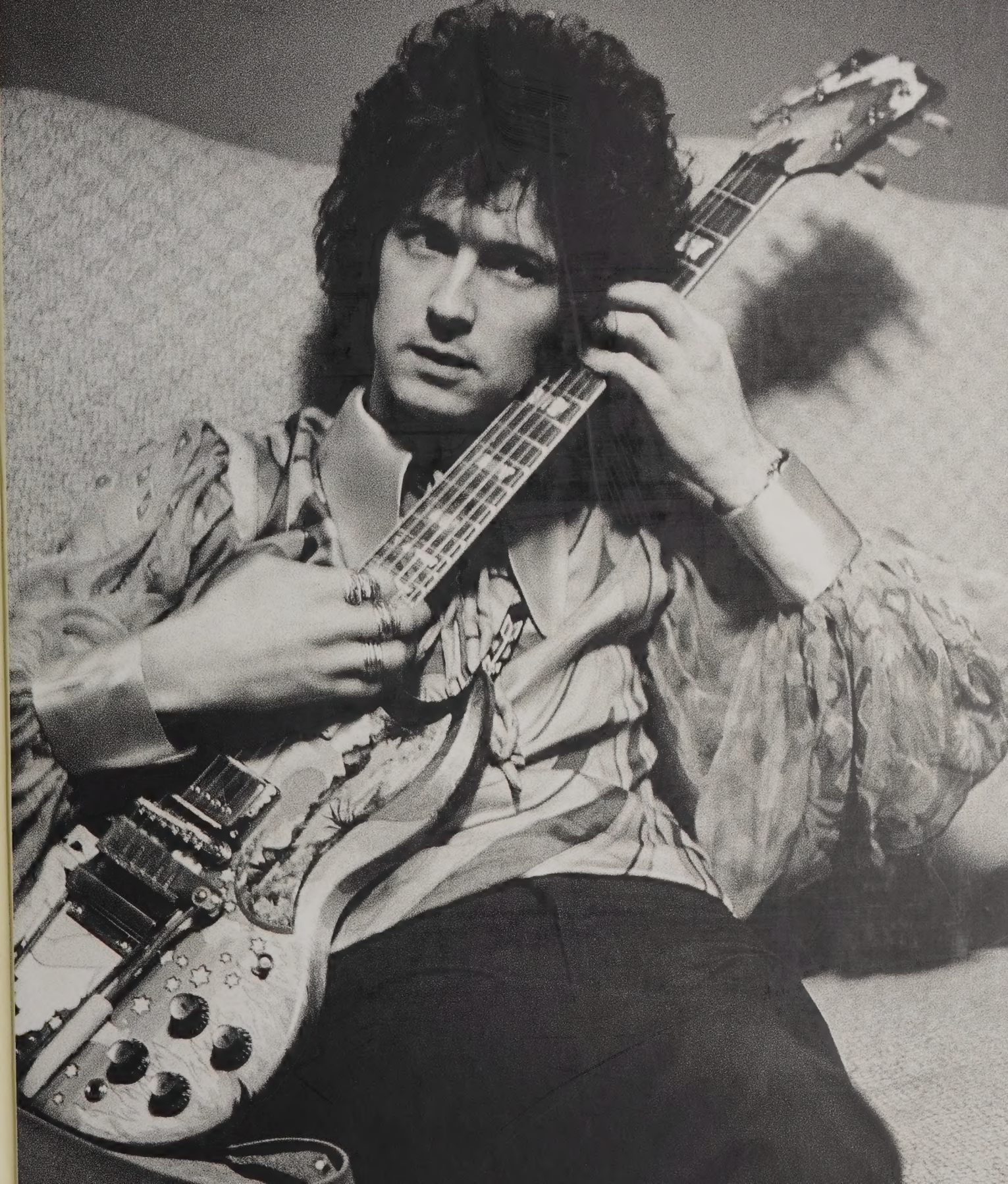

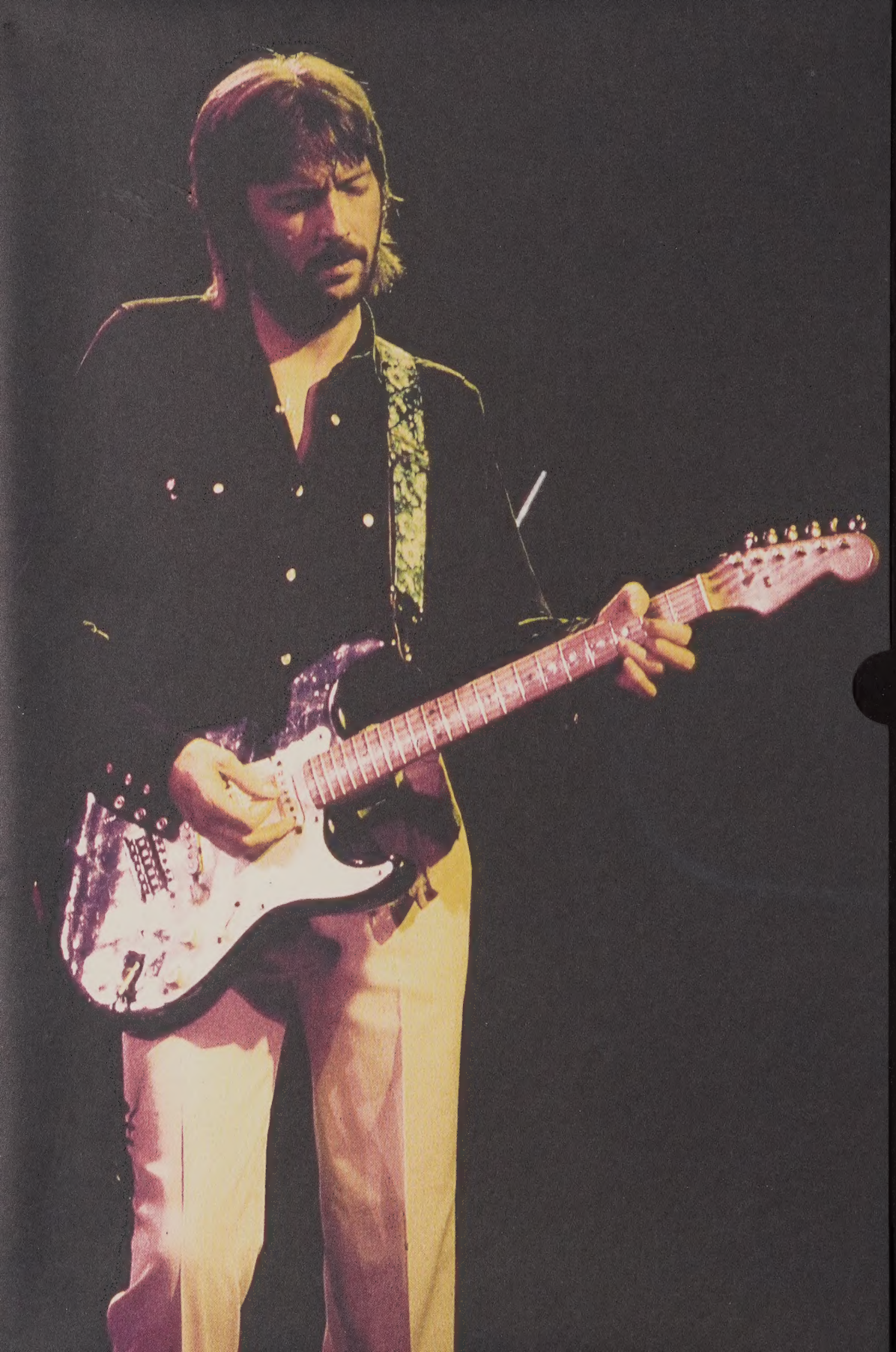

ENCLOSURE

ITEM 1

A Cream poster featuring the striking band logo. Starring Jack Bruce, Ginger Baker and Eric Clapton, Cream was the first of the "supergroups". They recorded four albums and were inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1993.

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ERIC CLAPTON

TREASURES

CHRIS WELCH

CARLTON BOOKS

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INTRODUCTION

ERIC'S 50 GLORIOUS YEARS

In October 1963, a smartly dressed young Mod was invited to join a rising R&B group called the Yardbirds. It was a step up for the former art student and semi-pro guitarist. It was also the start of an extraordinary 50-year career. Eric Clapton was about to embark on a unique personal journey and enjoy success on a scale few would have dreamt possible, least of all the dedicated blues enthusiast, who saw himself as a rebellious loner.

Over the next five decades Clapton would become a prime mover in shaping rock music history, an idol to generations of aspiring guitarists, an award winning singer/songwriter whose records sold in their millions and an international rock celebrity, feted by his peers and honoured by the Queen of England.

His life as a musician began amid the turmoil of the Sixties, a period of social and cultural upheaval. Clapton's struggle to come to terms with challenges in his personal and artistic life adds an epic quality to his story. Yet unlike many other troubled rock stars, Clapton conquered the problems that beset him in the wake of early fame and fortune. He regained his health, sanity and dignity and enjoyed wealth, acclaim and, more importantly, found personal happiness. In the process he has bequeathed an impressive legacy of musical achievements that still resonates with fans around the world.

Inspired by American folk and blues giants Robert Johnson and B.B. King, Clapton learned to weave his own guitar magic. After stints with the Yardbirds and John Mayall's Bluesbreakers, where his role as their dynamic lead guitarist led to him being hailed as "God", he found greater commercial success with Cream and Blind Faith, the first of the so-called supergroups.

Always restless and eager to move on, Clapton fled from his role as a guitar hero in the 1970s and headed in a different direction, one that enabled him to develop his talents as a singer and songwriter and gain freedom within his own bands. It wasn't an easy ride. When his classic song 'Layla' was initially overlooked, Clapton was upset. His struggle for acceptance was not helped when he sought anonymity, billing himself and his group as Derek and the Dominos. In the aftermath he plunged into a period of exile and a well-documented battle against drugs and drink.

On the road to recovery, Clapton was aided by friends and supporters who welcomed his return to live performances with an historic concert at London's Rainbow Theatre in 1973. His solo career took off in the Seventies with the belated success of 'Layla' in 1972 and a spirited version of Bob Marley's 'I Shot the Sheriff', a Number One hit single in America in 1974. *461 Ocean Boulevard* was acclaimed as Clapton's vitally important comeback album.

As Clapton's stature grew there were fruitful collaborations with fellow artists including Bob Dylan, George Harrison, Roger Waters and Phil Collins. And no important rock event was complete without an appearance by Eric Clapton. His own full-length seasons at London's Royal Albert Hall became legendary.

Amid the successes there were tragedies. The death of his four-year-old son Conor in March 1991 was a traumatic event that inspired Clapton's song 'Tears In Heaven', co-written with Will Jennings and a huge hit in 1992. It was the same year that 'Layla' returned to the charts; an acoustic version from *Unplugged*, the live album from his groundbreaking MTV show.

The winner of multiple Grammys, Eric received another accolade when he was awarded the CBE by the Queen in the 2004 New Year's Honours list. The following year Eric reformed Cream for shows in London and New York and later reunited with old pals Steve Winwood and Jeff Beck and happily jammed with the Rolling Stones. It was a time for acknowledging his past as well as settling down with his children in a happy marriage.

In 2013, at the age of 68, Eric Clapton celebrated his 50th anniversary as a professional musician with plans for a new album and US and European tours. He had nothing else to prove. Just carry on doing what he still enjoyed most – making music and playing the blues.

Chris Welch

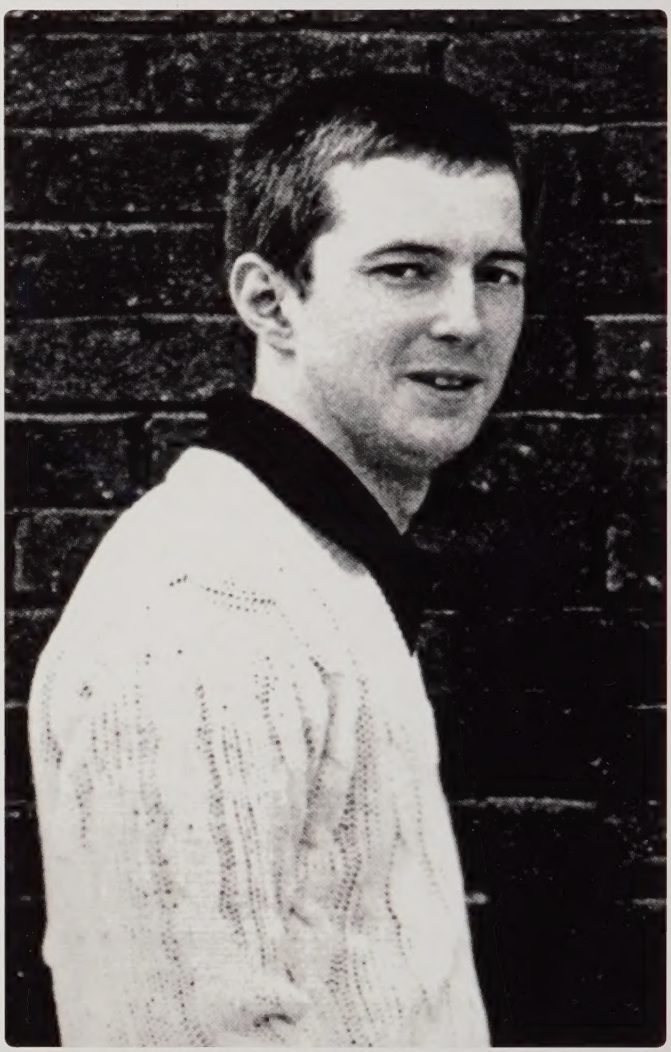
THE EARLY YEARS

WAY DOWN SOUTH

Eric Clapton was raised in a green and pleasant region of England known as the Surrey Delta. It is not exactly the Deep South and is far removed from the blues-rich US states of Alabama and Louisiana. Nevertheless, the leafy county southwest of London gave birth to much of the musical talent that helped foster the Sixties' blues revival. Fellow guitarists Jeff Beck and Jimmy Page grew up there and the Rolling Stones and Yardbirds played their earliest dates at Surrey clubs like the Crawdaddy in Richmond.

Eric Patrick Clapton was born on March 30, 1945 at his grandparents' home at 1 The Green, Ripley, Surrey. He was the son of Patricia Molly Clapton and a Canadian infantry soldier called Edward "Ted" Walter Fryer, who had been serving in England during World War II, having joined the army in 1940. The 25-year-old from Montreal had met 16-year-old Patricia in a Surrey dance hall in 1944. By all accounts he was a charmer who enjoyed painting and playing the piano. However, he had returned to Canada and a wife back home by the time his illegitimate child Eric was born to his English girlfriend.

Amid the complications of family lives disrupted by war, Pat married another Canadian soldier Frank McDonald a year later and moved with him to Dortmund, Germany and then to Canada. She left Eric in the care of his grandparents, Rose and Jack Clapp. Eric was led to believe they were his parents and that Pat was his sister. Jack Clapp, a bricklayer, was Rose's second husband and the similarity in the surnames resulted in people wrongly surmising that Eric's real surname was "Clapp". Rose's first husband was one Reginald Cecil Clapton.



"I WAS RAISED BY MY GRANDPARENTS UNDER THE ILLUSION THEY WERE MY PARENTS. IT WAS A KIND OF SCREWY SET UP." ERIC CLAPTON

Eric realized that "sister" Pat was actually his mother when she reappeared on a trip back from Canada, when he was nine years old. To complete the confusion, she habitually referred to her son as "Rick". It was a disturbing turn of events, yet Eric had a happy childhood and was very fond of his grandparents, particularly Rose, who liked swing music and played the piano.

She encouraged Eric's love of music and took a keen interest in his welfare and subsequent career. Rose and Jack were officially the boy's guardians until 1963, when Rose explained that his real mother was living abroad. Aged five he was sent to Ripley Primary School, where he was considered polite and well behaved. Nevertheless, discovering the true nature of his parentage and not knowing his real father proved unsettling for Eric. When his mother came to stay with him at the age of nine it was deemed necessary to continue describing her as his sister. He became moody and withdrawn and this affected his studies, causing concern to his teachers and grandparents. Said Eric later: "I had no idea what was real anymore."

He later went to St. Bede's and then Hollyfield Road School in Surbiton, where he studied art. He had already discovered rock'n'roll and the blues in the mid-1950s from records played on the radio during an era when American stars like Buddy Holly and Gene Vincent were making a huge impression on British teenagers. Eric also heard the R&B and blues forefathers of rock'n'roll and listened to records by Chuck Berry and the harmonica, vocal and guitar duo of Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee. He was thrilled when he saw Jerry Lee Lewis and his backing group on TV in 1958 and was smitten by a desire to play the guitar.

He was given a plastic toy Elvis Presley style guitar so that he could mime in front of a mirror to his favourite records. Later, at the age of 13, Eric was given a Spanish acoustic guitar for his birthday by his grandparents. But it proved difficult to play and for a while he lost interest.

On leaving school he was enrolled into Kingston Art College in 1961 where he was put on one year's probation. He went into the Graphics department rather than Fine Art and intended to study stained glass design. However, he soon began living the life of a rebellious beatnik, sporting long hair and wearing a beret. He started playing guitar again, having spent hours listening to tape recordings and studying the chords and fingering necessary to emulate his favourite blues songs by such artists as Leadbelly, Jimmy Reed, Muddy Waters and John Lee Hooker.

He sneaked off to London by night to visit traditional jazz clubs and at college he'd entertain fellow students by playing guitar at lunchtime. But work and attendance at college suffered and as a result he was expelled, much to his grandparents' dismay. Clapton was now convinced he could make a living as a musician and he replaced the acoustic with an electric guitar. He had been busking as a 16-year-old hobo, wandering around Kingston and Richmond. Then in 1962 he began performing as a pub act with a fellow blues fan, Dave Brock. His reputation as a guitarist was growing. Now it was time to find a proper group.

OPPOSITE Born at 1, The Green, Ripley, Surrey, England, in 1945, Clapton would discover aged nine that the woman he knew as his sister was actually his mother.

ABOVE The young Clapton discovered rock'n'roll in the mid-1950s and American artists Jerry Lee Lewis, Buddy Holly, Chuck Berry and Elvis Presley sparked his interest in music.

RIGHT A 1970 photography of Clapton posing with his grandmother Rose. She effectively raised Eric as her own son and encouraged him to take an interest in music.

BLUES ROOTS

THE ROOSTERS, CASEY JONES AND THE YARDBIRDS

At the age of 18 Eric Clapton joined his first band, the Roosters, a pioneering UK blues outfit formed by guitarist Tom McGuinness. By 1963 England was witnessing a remarkable revival of interest in the blues, set in motion by older jazz revivalists, notably guitarist Alexis Korner and band leader Chris Barber. The trombonist had ensured that many inspirational folk and blues artists from America visited Britain to play and Barber was also involved in the Marquee, an important showcase club in Soho, and the annual National Jazz & Blues Festival.

Lonnie Donegan had sparked a skiffle craze in 1956 with his hit recording of 'Rock Island Line', which encouraged thousands of school children to take up playing homemade instruments. Groups formed all over the country and guitar sales soared. Another trigger for the discovery of the roots of blues and rock'n'roll was the appearance of Chuck Berry in *Jazz On A Summer's Day* filmed at the 1958 Newport Jazz Festival, in Rhode Island.

By the early Sixties the hippest British teenagers were eagerly seeking out R&B albums by Bo Diddley, Chuck Berry and Muddy Waters as well as absorbing the acoustically performed songs of Robert Johnson and Huddie 'Leadbelly' Leadbetter.

The result would lead to the evolution of the Beatles and the Rolling Stones, not to mention the Animals and the Yardbirds. But in March 1963 it was still an act of bravery to form a fledgling blues group. Tom McGuinness was looking for a guitarist for his project and received help from his girlfriend Jenny, who had been at Kingston Art College with Eric. She advised Tom that Clapton was a serious blues fan who also played great guitar.

She introduced the pair and they set about planning the group that would eventually include Robin 'Ben' Palmer on piano, Terry Brennan (vocals) and Robin Mason (drums). Eric and Tom both played lead guitar and couldn't find a bass player willing to play R&B. However, the Roosters rehearsed in a pub in New Malden and began gigging at clubs and parties.

By day Eric had to earn his keep, working on building sites as a labourer. At night he enjoyed himself playing his Kay model electric guitar on tunes and riffs by T Bone Walker and Jimmy Reed. Clapton also heard a single of 'Hideaway' by US guitarist Freddie King, who would inspire his own string bending style.

"We weren't really professional and didn't have any money", recalled Eric later. "Everybody went through one amplifier. But it was fun and a proper blues band." The Roosters played the Marquee in Soho, where they supported Manfred Mann and at the Jazz Cellar in Kingston. Ben Palmer says that Eric was already an exciting guitarist who would delight audiences with effortless, lengthy solos.

However, the Roosters weren't earning much money and as various band members needed proper day jobs, the band broke up in August 1963. Terry Brennan would later join the Muleskinners, another pioneering R&B group led by organist Ian McLagan.

Clapton filled in time jamming with Alexis Korner's Blues Incorporated before joining a new group being formed at The Scene Club in Soho. It was led by Liverpool-based singer Brian Casser, who had previously fronted Cass and the Cassanovas.

He'd released a single in 1963 called 'One Way Ticket' under the name of Casey Jones & The Engineers and needed a backing band for tour dates. Eric was approached at the club by drummer Ray Stock to help out and Clapton said he'd do the gig if he could bring along Tom McGuinness, who agreed to play bass.

Casey Jones & The Engineers toured during August 1963 and Eric enjoyed the novelty of going on the road and playing at larger venues. However, when they were expected to back a female cabaret vocalist at a northern nightclub rather than play their favourite Chuck Berry hits, he began to have his doubts. Eric quit without warning, later describing his time as an Engineer as "disastrous".

Tom decided to leave as well and joined Manfred Mann before forming his own group McGuinness Flint. Brian Casser formed Casey Jones & The Governors and moved to Hamburg, Germany, where he had a few hit records and built up a local following.

Clapton meanwhile, had already set a precedent. If he wasn't happy in a band, he'd just up and leave and retain his independence. He was not prepared to be tied down to uncomfortable situations.

"...THEY ASKED ME TO JOIN [THE YARDBIRDS], I THOUGHT 'WELL, WHY NOT.'" ERIC CLAPTON

OPPOSITE The Roosters in 1963: Eric, playing a Kay guitar with Robin Mason (drums), Terry Brennan (vocals), Tom McGuinness (guitar) and Robin Palmer (piano).

ABOVE A young Eric Clapton cuts loose with the Yardbirds in 1964. He is playing a red Fender Telecaster guitar, later inherited by Jeff Beck when he replaced Eric in the group.

RIGHT The Yardbirds in action in 1964, with (left to right) Paul Samwell Smith (bass), Keith Relf (harmonica), Chris Dreja (rhythm) and a cropped-haired Clapton.

In October 1963 Eric was sought out by the Yardbirds. The group had replaced the Rolling Stones in their residency at the Crawdaddy Club, Richmond, after the Stones had experienced chart success with 'Come On' and 'I Wanna Be Your Man'. Eric was familiar with the group that had started out as the Metropolis Blues Quartet. They now comprised Keith Relf (vocals and harmonica), Anthony "Top" Topham (guitar), Chris Dreja (rhythm guitar), Paul Samwell-Smith (bass) and Jim McCarty (drums). Dreja and Topham like Eric, were former art school students. The Yardbirds started out playing at the Eel Pie Island club on the Thames, and at the Ricky Tick Club in Windsor. They had just begun to win over Stones fans at the Crawdaddy when 16-year-old Topham had to leave following parental pressure to resume his art studies.

The group was managed by Giorgio Gomelsky, a multi-lingual Russian émigré who had promoted the early Stones gigs. The Crawdaddy sessions were held at the Station Hotel and then moved to the Richmond Athletic Association Club. Keith and Chris had heard about Eric Clapton from their art school connections and it turned out Eric had been to see the group play a few times. He was invited to an audition and, said Clapton later: "I knew Tony Topham and when he had to leave and they asked me to join, I thought 'Well, why not?'"

After just one rehearsal at a pub in Richmond, Clapton was voted in and he could celebrate becoming a fully-fledged professional musician when he was given a red Fender Telecaster. Clapton, Dreja and Relf shared a flat and became good mates. He never got on well with Paul Samwell-Smith,but for a while Eric enjoyed being a Yardbird.

Gomelsky organized a recording contact with EMI and a residency at the Marquee. The group also supported the Beatles, when Eric first met George Harrison. They appeared on TV and radio and were featured in the music press. Eric was nicknamed "Slowhand" Clapton by the band's publicist Hamish Grimes, as a result of Eric's habit of breaking the light gauge strings he used to facilitate note bending. When the group had to wait for him to restring his guitar between numbers, impatient audiences broke into a slow handclap. Eric's guitar style was still developing when the Yardbirds recorded a set at the Marquee in 1964 for their debut album *Five Live Yardbirds* (Columbia).

Released in December 1964, Eric could be heard on the record playing in a fast, frantic manner. Eric had also been recorded live when the Yardbirds backed visiting American harmonica player Sonny Boy Williamson at the Crawdaddy in December 1963. Eric was in awe of the whisky-drinking blues legend, but it gave him a great first-hand experience of the real thing. Sonny Boy also worked with other groups such as the Animals and grew very fond of his young British backing musicians. He returned home to the States to carry on performing, but died in his sleep in May 1965.

The first studio recording featuring Eric's nascent blues guitar was the Yardbirds' debut single 'I Wish You Would' (Columbia) released in July 1964. It was based on a furious, insistent theme by Billy Boy Arnold, with Clapton and Dreja backing Relf's vocals and harmonica interludes, building up layers of riffs and chords in the exultant "rave up" style pioneered by the group. 'A Certain Girl' on the B-side gave Eric more space for a solo which he delivered with biting intensity.

The group's next single, 'Good Morning Little Schoolgirl' coupled with 'I Ain't Got You' (Columbia) was released in October 1964. The A-side had space for some wailing guitar amid the poppy vocals while the B-side was decidedly heavier with Clapton's boldest and most furious breaks yet.

ABOVE With his music career beginning to take off, a smartly dressed Eric Clapton relaxes in Hyde Park, London, in 1964.

"WE WEREN'T REALLY PROFESSIONAL AND [WE] DIDN'T HAVE ANY MONEY." ERIC CLAPTON

OPPOSITE Keith, Chris, Paul, Jim and Eric pose for this iconic Yardbirds' publicity shot from 1964.

ABOVE Clapton experienced his first taste of chart success with the Yardbirds, but soon he was looking to leave for a new challenge.

RIGHT He may have been with the Yardbirds for only just over a year, but Eric's performances had caught the attention of the music press and fans.

While 'Good Morning Little Schoolgirl' got to only Number 44 in the UK chart, thanks to a ban by BBC Radio, the Yardbirds achieved their breakthrough with 'For Your Love', a clever arrangement of an unusual song by Graham Gouldman. Harpsichord and bongos backed doomy vocal harmonies and although it ensured the group a Number 3 hit in March 1965 the record marked the end of Eric Clapton's tenure with the group. He felt they'd gone "too commercial" and quit just two weeks before the record entered the Top 10. At least he had left behind one of the finest of his early recordings in 'Got To Hurry', the instrumental B-side of 'For Your Love'. Who knew that this was the sound that rock and blues fans all over the world would come to cherish and demand for the next five decades?

"CLAPTON IS GOD..."

JOHN MAYALL'S BLUESBREAKERS

When Eric Clapton left the Yardbirds the news created such a stir one music critic was heard to exclaim: "But he's the best thing in it!" *Melody Maker* duly reported in March 1965: "Eric Clapton, lead guitarist with the Yardbirds has left the group because he says 'They're going too commercial'." Yet the group was ready for his departure, having detected his growing disenchantment. Clapton was swiftly replaced by Jeff Beck on the recommendation of session player Jimmy Page.

Eric went through a period of confusion and even considered abandoning music and taking up painting. He says: "Playing with the Yardbirds put me in a strange frame of mind. I was all screwed up about my playing and I'd lost a lot of my original values. My attitude within the group got really sour and it was kind of hinted that it would be better for me to leave. I was withdrawing into myself, becoming intolerable, really dogmatic."

All was not lost. The telephone rang and he was invited to join one of the most dedicated bluesmen in the country. John Mayall was the Manchester-born leader of the Bluesbreakers. He played organ, guitar and sang with a biting sincerity. The band did well on the club circuit but was destined to become a bigger attraction once Eric joined, replacing incumbent guitarist Roger Dean in May 1965. The rest of the group comprised John McVie on bass and Hughie Flint on drums. At least Eric had the opportunity to play in a pure blues setting. As Clapton said: "I knew Mayall's music and had a soft spot for him and I just made up my mind to join him because I thought it was the only thing to do."

Clapton was back on the road, although it meant travelling long distances in a cold and noisy van. Yet he still got only a few 12-bar solos a night. As fans flocked to Bluesbreakers gigs, they began shouting "Give God a solo!" and graffiti slogans were daubed on walls proclaiming "Clapton is God." Fly posters announced "John Mayall's Bluesbreakers With The Wonderful Eric Clapton".

John Mayall was born in Macclesfield, Cheshire on November 29, 1933 and his role as a musical catalyst would earn him the title "Father of the British Blues". Mayall was an eccentric disciplinarian who hit the headlines as a young man when he lived inside his own tree house. He formed the Powerhouse Four in 1955 and did his National Service in the Army before moving to London and resuming his career as an R&B pioneer.

While John never told Clapton how to play, life with the Bluesbreakers wasn't exactly fun and games. Eric: "I'd seen the Bluesbreakers play at the Flamingo and wasn't really that keen on them and John had many quirks. No one was allowed to drink! John McVie got slung out of the band wagon halfway between Birmingham and London one night because he was drunk and he had to make his own way home.

"Also John had his own bunk bed in the van and you had to sit upright in the front while he got into bed in the back. If we did a gig in Manchester he'd go to his mum's and we'd have to sleep in the van. He didn't get you a hotel, so there were disadvantages to being in that band!"

Clapton became restless. In August 1965 he abruptly quit and put an ad hoc group together called the Glands with like-minded musos, including ex-Rooster Ben Palmer. They set off on a trip around the world but got only as far as Greece, where they ran out of money and things began to go horribly wrong.

"I was living with some pretty mad people," says Eric of that time. "Just drinking wine all day and listening to jazz and blues. We decided to pool our money, buy an estate car and take off round the world. The gig with Mayall had become a job and I wanted to go and have some fun. So we ended up in Greece, playing blues."

A club proprietor in Athens hired Eric and his mates to open for a local group that played Beatles songs. Sadly some of that band were involved in a road accident and Clapton had to play Beatles covers all night with the remnants of their group. Eric realized he was trapped when the proprietor confiscated his guitar as insurance. After a couple of weeks, Eric escaped by train to England with his precious guitar. As soon as he arrived at Victoria Station he phoned John Mayall and said, "I'm back."

> "I'D SEEN THE BLUESBREAKERS PLAY AT THE FLAMINGO AND WASN'T REALLY THAT KEEN ON THEM AND JOHN HAD MANY QUIRKS. NO ONE WAS ALLOWED TO DRINK!" ERIC CLAPTON

Eric's second period with the Bluesbreakers ran from November 1965 until June 1966. Audiences marvelled at the fluency of his playing and Mayall showcased his skills on *Blues Breakers With Eric Clapton* (Decca) released in July 1966. Critics raved and the album was a surprise hit.

Yet he still wasn't taking life entirely seriously. He was photographed avidly reading a children's comic on the band's LP cover. Henceforth it would be known as "the Beano album". Even before it was released Clapton was pondering his next step. He wanted his own group with the best musicians. It would be called Cream.

"ERIC WAS A VERY MOODY PLAYER...WITH A SLOW BLUES HE COULD SEND SHIVERS DOWN YOUR SPINE." JOHN MAYALL

ABOVE Eric engrossed in his favourite comic on the classic "Beano" album cover. He said in his autobiography that he was reading it because he felt like being "uncooperative".

RIGHT John Mayall's Bluesbreakers in 1966 (John Mayall, Hughie Flint, Clapton and John McVie). Clapton was gaining his own personal following, who came just to see him play.

THE BIRTH OF CREAM

THE FIRST OF THE SUPERGROUPS

By the mid-Sixties there emerged a new breed of guitarists, bass players and drummers whose skills and individuality were so outstanding they began to attract the kind of attention normally accorded singing stars. The only problem was, they weren't all necessarily in the same group.

There grew a feeling of "wouldn't it be great if..." And that idea ultimately led to the creation of all-star assemblies of the best players, henceforth known as supergroups. Eric Clapton would head up the first such ensemble. Cream was an all-powerful trio that would change his fortunes, make him an international star and alter the course of rock history. His partners in the new venture were Scottish singer, harmonica player and bass guitarist Jack Bruce and wild-eyed, red-haired Peter "Ginger" Baker on drums.

It was a Baker who first approached Clapton with the idea of forming a group, although the guitarist had already been mulling over the idea. It seemed an obvious step and a way of gaining control over his musical destiny. Cream would give Eric a chance to become a leader and develop his other talents as a singer and songwriter. In the process the group would become enormously successful and yet Clapton would still experience the feeling that things were running out of his control. The other two members weren't going to be subservient backing musicians. They had their own ideas and egos to match.

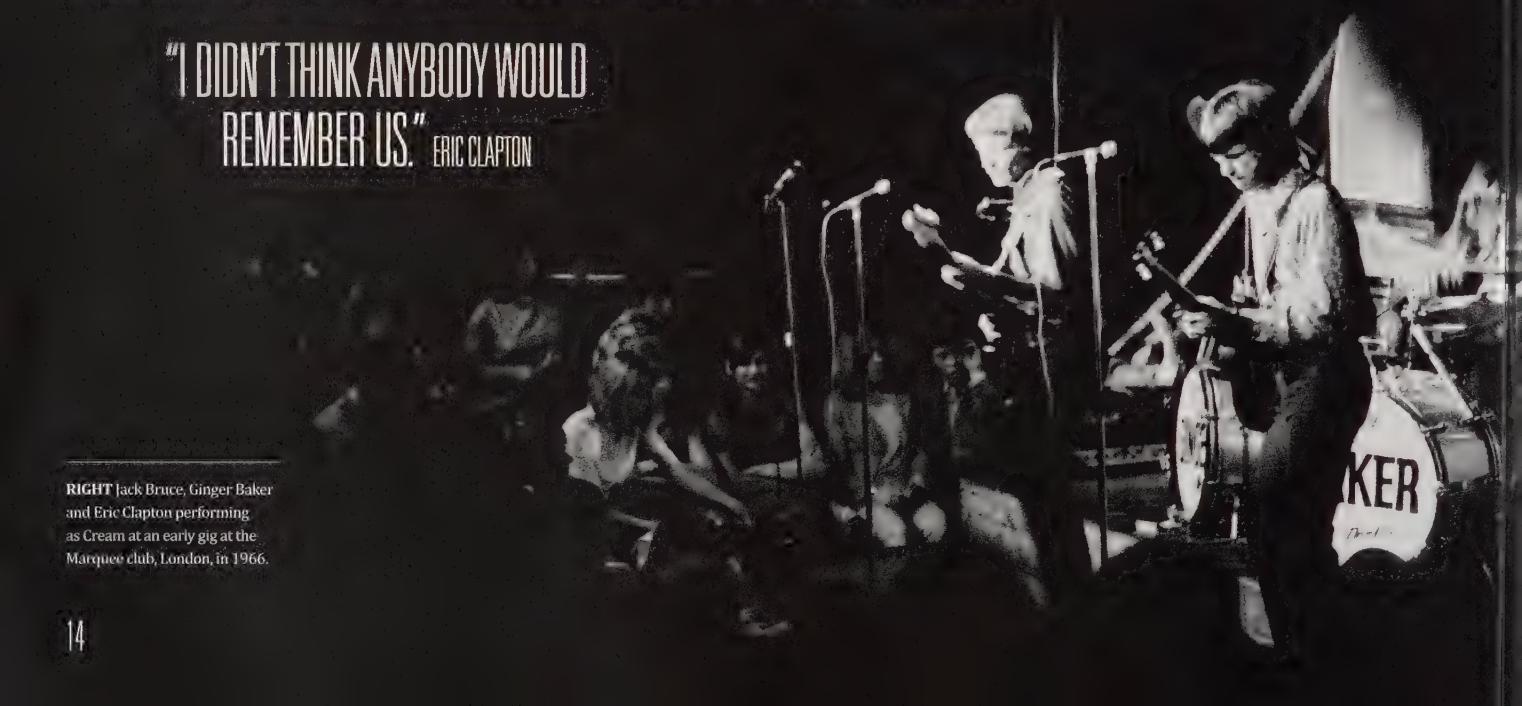
The road to Cream began when Eric returned from his trip to Greece to find Jack Bruce (born May 14, 1943 in Glasgow, Scotland) playing bass guitar with the Bluesbreakers having replaced John McVie. Bruce had been let go from the Graham Bond Organisation following a violent dispute with their drummer, Ginger Baker (born August 19, 1939 in Lewisham, London).

Clapton was struck by the power of his bass playing and his soulful vocal style. "I knew how good he was from then on," said Eric. "He sang a couple of things and they were really great. He was a natural first choice for any group I might dream about forming." When Bruce left to join Manfred Mann and Mayall got John McVie back, Eric decided playing with Jack was more exciting. "There was something creative there. I thought, well if he could do that, and we could get a drummer...I could be Buddy Guy with a composing bass player. And that's how Cream came about."

One night in June 1966, when the Bluesbreakers were playing a gig in Oxford, Ginger Baker arrived unannounced and asked if he could sit in and jam with the band. He too had quit the Graham Bond Organisation and had been discussing his own future with manager Robert Stigwood. Within a few bars of the drummer taking over, Baker's playing galvanized the Bluesbreakers and Eric knew he had found his man. At the end of the set, the two had a drink and Ginger said: "How about getting a group together?"

Eric thought this was telepathy. His dream group would certainly feature Ginger Baker, but he also wanted a particular bass player. Eric replied: "Yes, what about Jack?" The drummer thought for a moment and then agreed. Despite previous altercations, he talked to Jack and the Scot needed little persuasion. As Jack recalls: "Ginger came round and asked if I would join him to help form the new band. He had already approached Eric and he'd said yes, but he wanted me to be the singer in the band. I had only recently fallen out with Ginger after we had a fight during a gig with Graham Bond's band and I'd left. It must have been quite a thing for him to come back and ask me to join him with Eric. Obviously I was very pleased to try it."

"I DIDN'T THINK ANYBODY WOULD REMEMBER US." ERIC CLAPTON



RIGHT Jack Bruce, Ginger Baker and Eric Clapton performing as Cream at an early gig at the Marquee club, London, in 1966.

ENCLOSURES

ITEM 2

The famous home of the Beatles, The Cavern in Liverpool, was invaded by Eric Clapton and the Yardbirds in January 1964.

ITEM 3

An original single-sided business card for the Yardbirds. It includes an endorsement from influential blues musician Sonny Boy Williamson, with whom the band recorded an album.

ITEM 4

Manfred Mann and the Yardbirds guest star on Granada's "The Marquee Show" in 1965. Eric Clapton was the Yardbirds' lead guitarist from October 1963 to March 1965.

ITEM 5

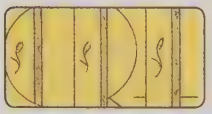
Signed Polaroid photographs of Cream performing in Gothenburg, Sweden, in March 1967.

ITEM 6

The Yardbirds and Cream share the bill at the Royal Agricultural College Charity "Rag Rave" in May 1967.

ITEM 7

A hand bill for the legendary "Barbecue 67" in Spalding, England, when Cream joined forces with the Jimi Hendrix Experience and Pink Floyd, all for £1.00 admission.



ITEM 8

Flower Power explodes in Torquay in 1967 with the "powerful sound of Cream", at a gig also showcasing the wonderfully named "In-Sect".

ITEM 9

A Marquee Club flyer from November 1967, with a mouth-watering agenda including Cream's "Long Awaited Return".

LEFT ABOVE AND BELOW Cream was an all-star assembly, with each musician at the top of their game.

BELOW Clapton glammed up at Cream's official debut gig at the Windsor Jazz & Blues Festival in 1966.

ABOVE Cream heralded the birth of the "supergroup" and there was a frenzy of press interest in the band.

Cream would be managed by Robert Stigwood. After a few rehearsals the trio's existence was announced in *Melody Maker* on July 11, 1966. This caused quite a stir as their existing employers John Mayall and Manfred Mann professed to know nothing about such plans.

The group made its live debut at the Windsor National Jazz and Blues Festival on July 31. Despite pouring rain the show was a huge success. Cream was signed to a record contract and released a single called 'Wrapping Paper' in October. It only just scraped into the UK Top 40. But bigger things lay ahead. Whether he liked it or not, Eric Clapton was about to become a pop star.

CREAM
HELLO AND GOODBYE

Eric Clapton's days as a sideman who was allowed a few solos by his employers were well and truly over when Cream was launched on the world in the summer of 1966. Soon the nation's guitar hero was hard pressed to keep up with the demands on his playing.

Audiences just couldn't get enough of the thunderous roar of high intensity music being pumped out of Marshall amplifiers. Far from being a modest blues trio with a compliant rhythm section, Cream evolved into an entirely different beast, bent on world domination. Over the next three years they made meteoric progress, but like most shooting stars, burnt themselves out in the process.

On the one hand Cream was a live rock group, happy to jam on long solos that showcased instrumental prowess. Eric satisfied his fans with extended versions of 'Stepping Out' that he'd first featured on the Blues Breakers album. Jack Bruce went wild on harmonica and vocals on the epic 'Traintime'. Ginger Baker would be featured on his marathon climactic drum solo 'Toad'.

But there was also the creative songwriting aspect of Cream's work. In the studio they worked out arrangements for specific album tracks lifting the group's music beyond basic blues into new dimensions. They received invaluable help from poet and lyricist Pete Brown, who co-wrote with Jack Bruce such classic tracks as 'Sunshine Of Your Love', 'Politician' and 'White Room'.

A combination of skills ensured the group could tackle playing long shows at big venues on extended US tours while unleashing a flow of hit albums and singles. They set the template for the worldwide rock industry of the future and paved the way for groups such as Led Zeppelin.

After playing small club dates in the UK and releasing the quirky 'Wrapping Paper', Cream moved on up with 'I Feel Free', another Bruce/Brown song that got to Number 11 in the UK singles chart in January 1967. Their debut album *Fresh Cream* established their unique blend of poppy vocals and bluesy instrumentals and was a Top 10 hit.

In March 1967 they flew to New York, where they appeared on Murray The K's "Music In the Fifth Dimension", a week-long package show at the RKO Theater in Manhattan, which also included the Who. Although allowed to play only a couple of numbers they had lots of fun and also managed to fit in recording their next album *Disraeli Gears* at Atlantic Records studio.

In April they toured the States and their third single 'Strange Brew', written by Clapton and producer Felix Pappalardi, reached Number 17 in the UK. Back home Cream played sold out shows at the Saville Theatre, a prestigious London venue run by Beatles manager Brian Epstein and in August 1967 they made a return appearance at the seventh Windsor Jazz & Blues Festival.

With *Disraeli Gears* a Top Five hit in both the US and UK the group was enjoying enormous success, further enhanced by 'Sunshine Of Your Love', a song by Bruce, Brown and Clapton that became one of rock's best loved riffs. Cream's first US hit single, it leapt to Number 5 in the US *Billboard* chart in February 1968. Hippies flocked to venues such as the Fillmore West to commune with Cream's freak out performances.

But despite all this popularity, rumours began to circulate that Cream was on the verge of splitting up. Eric was seen looking ill and miserable at parties back in London and Jack Bruce said later: "I think we began to want to go our separate ways after the first American tour which lasted four and a half months. We got tired of each other and Cream."

"THOSE GUYS WERE PRETTY STRONG PERSONALITIES. AT THE FIRST REHEARSAL MOST OF MY AMBITION TO LEAD THE GROUP WENT OUT OF THE WINDOW." ERIC CLAPTON

Eric was concerned by the success of the Jimi Hendrix Experience, another powerhouse trio making waves in 1967. Disturbed by bickering between Baker and Bruce he found life on the road increasingly difficult. Clapton wanted to feel free.

In September 1968 it was announced that Cream would break up. They played concerts at Madison Square Garden, New York and were filmed for a BBC TV documentary at the Royal Albert Hall in London in November. The double album *Wheels of Fire,* combining live and studio tracks, topped the US charts and was followed by *Goodbye,* which included Clapton's song 'Badge', co-written with George Harrison. It was a shame but Eric needed a rest. He was still hoping to form his ideal band, the one that hadn't quite materialized with Cream.

OPPOSITE It's a wrap. Cream perform 'Wrapping Paper' at ATV's "Ready, Steady Go!", November 1, 1966.

RIGHT Flower Power rules as Clapton performs at the Palais des Sports, Paris, in 1967.

BELOW (TOP) Cream make their debut on "Top of the Pops" in 1966. The band get into the party spirit by performing in prison uniforms.

BELOW But it wasn't to last and Cream played their farewell concert at the Royal Albert Hall in November 1968.

BELOW RIGHT Cream was a band of big characters and immense talent, but arguments between Baker and Bruce meant being in the band was an uncomfortable experience. After less than two years, Cream disbanded.

"IN CREAM THERE WAS A CONSTANT BATTLE BETWEEN GINGER AND JACK. THEY LOVED ONE ANOTHER'S PLAYING BUT COULDN'T STAND THE SIGHT OF EACH OTHER. I WAS THE MEDIATOR."

ERIC CLAPTON

BLIND FAITH

THE ULTIMATE SUPERGROUP

Cream had been extraordinarily successful, but the experience left Clapton exhausted and unsure about his future. At least he was able to spend time at Hurtwood Edge, the Surrey mansion he had bought from the proceeds of US tours and hit records. Amid peaceful surroundings he began thinking tentatively about forming his next group.

Eric had long admired the work of Steve Winwood, the singer, guitarist and organist who had come to fame with the Spencer Davis Group, which enjoyed hits with 'Keep On Running' in 1965 and 'I'm A Man' in 1967. The pair had jammed at gigs in the past and become good friends. Steve (born May 12, 1948, Handsworth, Birmingham) had been with his own band Traffic since 1967, but they had split up in December 1968 and now the possibility loomed of a Clapton/Winwood fusion.

Meanwhile Eric was happy to sit in with friends and take part in events like filming *The Rolling Stones Rock and Roll Circus*, when he jammed alongside John Lennon, Yoko Ono and Keith Richards. He also collaborated with the Beatles at the behest of George Harrison, who invited him to play on George's song 'While My Guitar Gently Weeps', recorded at Abbey Road Studios.

But the pressure was on for Clapton to return to the fray, and in February 1969 it was announced he was intending to form a new group. It would eventually be called Blind Faith, a name chosen by Eric because he felt the whole project would be something of a gamble. Steve Winwood was his first choice as lead singer and keyboard player.

> "ERIC BEGAN HANGING OUT WITH DELANEY & BONNIE AND WE HARDLY EVER SAW HIM. HE WAS GOING THROUGH AN ODD PERIOD IN HIS LIFE." GINGER BAKER

"Eric and I had always talked about playing and the time seemed right," said Steve. But they hadn't yet decided on a drummer or bass player. Given that Clapton had been upset by the feuding between Baker and Bruce in Cream, he was keen to start afresh with new faces. One rumour suggested they might record an album using drummer Al Jackson and bassist Duck Dunn, the rhythm section from Booker T. & the M.G.'s.

Clapton and Winwood were keen to move in a more relaxed musical direction, away from the intensity of Cream and more in the style of Bob Dylan's Canadian backing group the Band. But right from the start their intentions were compromised when a

certain drummer arrived at their rehearsals. When Ginger Baker heard about their plans he drove down to Eric's house and followed Clapton's car to Steve's cottage in Berkshire, where a session was due to take place. On arrival he assumed his natural role at the drum kit. Nobody had the heart to say no.

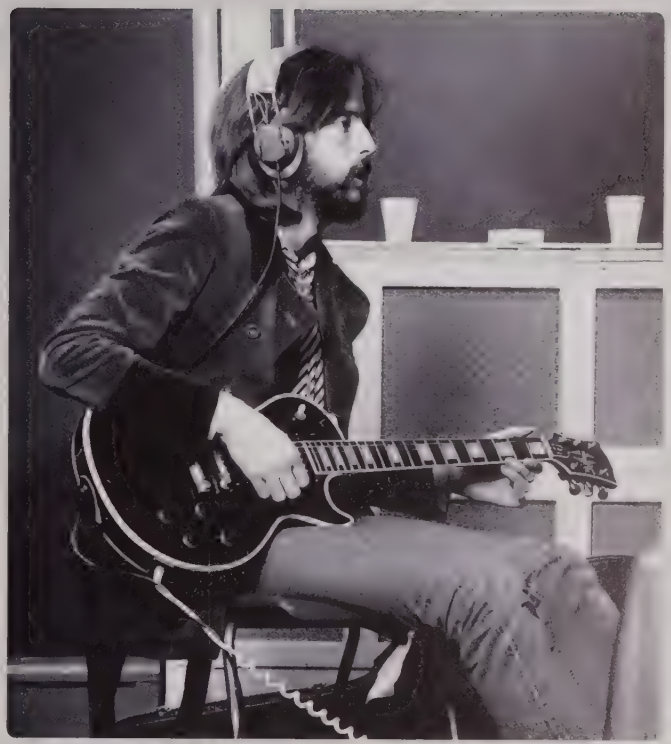
Ginger fondly remembers the early sessions with Eric at Winwood's country home. "We had a crazy drive in Stevie's Land Rover across ploughed fields to his cottage, where we had a magical jam. We just did it for enjoyment but it was Eric's manager Robert Stigwood who suggested we put a band together. Eric came up with the name Blind Faith and we got Ric Grech on bass from Family. We did the Blind Faith album and then a concert. Blind Faith was such a relief because the last year with Cream was not very enjoyable. We did some great music together and Blind Faith was a lovely album. 'Presence Of The Lord' is a classic."

Work began on recording the album at Olympic Studios in Barnes with Rolling Stones producer Jimmy Miller. The press announced the formation of the new "ultimate supergroup" and Blind Faith made their live debut appearance at a free concert in London's Hyde Park on June 7, 1969. A huge crowd of 10,000 fans showed up on a warm and sunny day to sit on the grass and listen to the group giving a laid back, casual performance. The group was perched on a low stage and the mood was more like a picnic than a heavy rock festival.

They performed material from their first and only album, eventually released in August. During the concert Eric played a Fender Telecaster and spent a lot of time leaning against an amplifier, looking detached. Songs such as 'Sea Of Joy', 'Had To Cry Today', 'Presence Of The Lord' and 'Can't Find My Way Home' were plaintive and melodic but lacked the punch former Cream fans were expecting. Nevertheless they raised a cheer, especially when Ginger played a drum solo on 'Do What You Like.'

The 40-minute Hyde Park show was filmed in colour but was never seen in its entirety until it was released on DVD (Sanctuary Visual Entertainment) in 2004. It was an historic souvenir. The Hyde Park concert was Blind Faith's only British appearance.

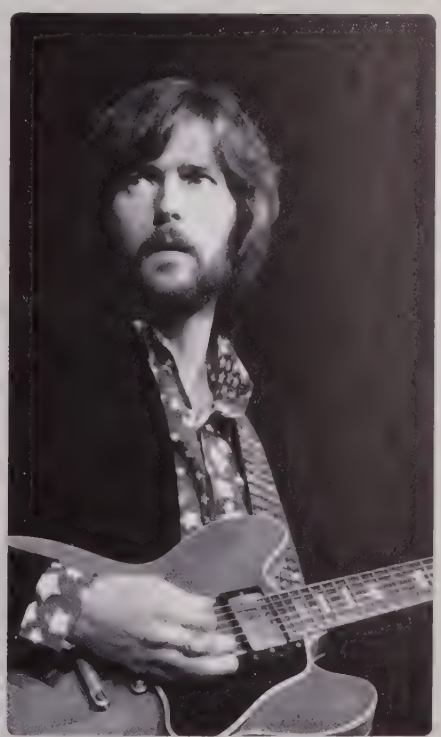
Clapton, Winwood, Baker and Grech headed to Finland on June 12 for the start of a Scandinavian tour, where they found themselves billed as "the new Cream" and



OPPOSITE Blind Faith outside Olympic Studios, Barnes, in 1969, taking a break from work on the debut album.

BELOW LEFT Ric Grech, Ginger Baker and Clapton in concert at the Los Angeles Forum in August 1969.

ABOVE & BELOW Clapton laying down tracks for Blind Faith's self-titled album and performing at an early concert.



playing to a half empty hall. Next came a US tour that began in Newport, Rhode Island on July 11. The following show at Madison Square Garden, New York was a sell-out, but they had to play 'Sunshine Of Your Love' to please a rowdy audience.

Fans greeted them with a standing ovation but began shouting for hit songs from Clapton and Winwood's past, like 'Crossroads' or 'Dear Mr. Fantasy', and booed when they weren't played. The stage revolved, the sound was poor, beer cans were thrown and a riot broke out. Conditions on the rest of the dates weren't much better. Winwood was so upset at the poor equipment at one venue he refused to play.

Blind Faith were supported on these tumultuous dates by the American group Delaney & Bonnie, recommended to Clapton by his pal George Harrison. They were

"I DON'T THINK [BLIND FAITH] IS GOING TO STAY TOGETHER VERY LONG. STEVIE IS GOING TO DO SOMETHING ON HIS OWN AND I WILL TOO." ERIC CLAPTON

guitarist Delaney Bramlett and his wife, vocalist Bonnie. She had sung as a young girl with Albert King and been a member of the Ike & Tina Turner Revue. Their presence would have a strong impact on Eric. He enjoyed their music so much he began hanging out and sitting in with them and proclaimed Delaney & Bonnie were a much better group than Blind Faith.

Eric's own supergroup had much to offer, but the mood around them was bleak. As Ginger Baker recalls: "Some of the Blind Faith songs were really beautiful but the American tour we did in July that year was a bit strange. Eric began hanging out with Delaney & Bonnie and we hardly ever saw him. He was going through an odd period in his life."

Following the Madison Square debacle there was another troubled show at the Los Angeles Forum when sections of the audience fought with the police and officers even jumped on the stage, forcing the guitarist up against his amplifiers. Critics in the States began to view Blind Faith as a case of commercial interests overpowering artistic good intentions. Such news was slow to get back home, where fans were still expecting a UK Blind Faith tour. Their hopes would be dashed. Eric explained his frustrations to reporters: "I don't think the group is going to stay together very long. Stevie is going to do something on his own and I will too."

"On that US tour terrible things happened," said Ginger Baker. "There was a lot of violence at the gigs caused by the police, particularly in Phoenix, Arizona. The last gig in Hawaii was one of the best but when I got back to England Stevie Winwood told me the group had broken up. He'd put Traffic back together and Eric was off with Delaney & Bonnie. I formed Airforce and that was the end of Blind Faith."

When Blind Faith's self-titled album was released, it caused controversy over a garish cover that featured a naked 11-year-old girl holding a silver aeroplane. There were protests from the band's American record company and a second version was hastily prepared, with a simple cover photograph of the group members.

Blind Faith quietly split in August, while Ginger was on holiday. Eric stayed in New York and then returned to his Surrey home where he welcomed Delaney & Bonnie as guests. They prepared a European tour together billed as "Delaney & Bonnie & Friends", who included Jim Gordon, Carl Radle, Bobby Whitlock, Leon Russell, Dave Mason and George Harrison. In Germany some promoters billed them as "Cream" and audiences booed when Eric was seen skulking at the back of the stage. They all received a warmer reception at London's Royal Albert Hall on December 1, 1969. They also recorded a show at the Fairfield Hall, Croydon, released as On Tour With Eric Clapton (Atco) in April 1970.

As the 1970s dawned, Eric Clapton was getting ready to make or break his career. He had help but life was about to become ever more turbulent.

BELOW 'Do What You Like' – Blind Faith jamming in their debut live performance at the free Hyde Park concert in 1969. A crowd of 10,000 fans watched the relaxed and laidback performance. Clapton played a Fender Telecaster.

OPPOSITE Lost in his music. Eric Clapton plays a Gibson hollow-body electric guitar in 1969.

CLAPTON'S ALBUMS
THE SIXTIES

Clapton's recorded work during the Sixties reveals an artist making rapid progress from excitable youth to musical maturity, exploring his love for traditional blues and R&B while bringing innovative new sounds into heavy rock.

THE YARDBIRDS *FIVE LIVE YARDBIRDS* (COLUMBIA UK) 1965.

The group's debut album captured the exciting sound of the Yardbirds at the Marquee, the legendary London venue where they played regularly to a loyal following. Fans queued along Wardour Street, Soho, to gain entrance to the dark and steamy club. They enjoyed seeing blond-haired singer Keith Relf onstage backed by Chris Dreja, Paul Samwell-Smith and Jim McCarty. But many came especially to see their idol, the young Eric Clapton making waves on guitar.

Manager Giorgio Gomelsky conceived the idea of making a live rather than a studio album. It was a gamble, but in the event the two sets recorded on March 20, 1964 worked well and came complete with urgent announcements and audience cheers.

Recorded on an Ampex tape recorder owned by engineer Phillip Wood, there was panic behind the scenes as people tripped over wires and erased some of the precious tape including Eric's showcase 'I Wish You Would'. Giorgio's right-hand man Hamish Grimes is the compère who introduces the "Most blues wailing Yardbirds" with "Eric Slowhand Clapton". A lively 'Too Much Monkey Business' has a Chuck Berry flourish from Clapton, who solos with manic fury between Keith's breathless vocals. After a jerky 'I Got Love If You Want It' comes a five-minute rave-up version of 'Smokestack Lightnin' with Relf's wailing harmonica underpinned by Clapton's crescendo of chords.

Eric and Paul Samwell-Smith share vocals on 'Good Morning Little Schoolgirl' and the first set concludes with the Isley Brothers' standard 'Respectable' and Eric's high speed solo. The set resumes with 'Five Long Years', a slow blues track with room for Clapton to dig into a groove and reveal his guitar's distinctive tone.

'Pretty Girl' sounds more like frantic skiffle than gutsy R&B and led to hotly disputed suggestions the tape was speeded up. John Lee Hooker's 'Louise' has Clapton working behind Relf's vocals, but he is allowed a few bars of pent-up fury. 'I'm A Man' doubles tempo amid much string bashing and the final track, Bo Diddley's 'Here 'Tis', is another furious crowd pleaser that has too many "Whoa ho ho's" and not enough guitar.

Chris Dreja: "The audience loved it all. We played twice as loud and fast as normal. It was a great night. Eric broke his usual number of strings!"

JOHN MAYALL'S BLUESBREAKERS *BLUES BREAKERS WITH ERIC CLAPTON* (DECCA) 1966

Produced by Mike Vernon and engineered by the late Gus Dudgeon, the album was recorded during a few hours at Decca's London studios, in April 1966. It would present the full flowering of Eric Clapton's blues style and become an inspirational best seller. His guitar playing here is still deemed "spine tingling" by critics and fans alike and he achieves a level of emotional intensity that lifts the spirits. Eric uses a 1960 Sunburst Gibson Les Paul Standard guitar and 60-watt Marshall amplifier to obtain maximum volume and the full blooded overdriven sound that's missing from his Yardbirds live recordings.

Among highlights on the album's 12 tracks are his solos on 'All Your Love' and 'Hideaway' while the instrumental 'Steppin' Out' would become a regular feature of future shows with Cream and beyond. Clapton also sings on the Robert Johnson song 'Ramblin' On My Mind'. Sadly the guitar used on what became known as "the Beano album" would be stolen, leaving Clapton bereft.

CREAM *FRESH CREAM* (REACTION UK, ATCO US) 1966

Expectations were high when Cream released their debut and the trio was keen to make up for the disappointment engendered by their first single 'Wrapping Paper'. *Fresh Cream* has a solid set of blues standards, given a dynamic treatment and mixed with some innovative originals. It was recorded at Spot Studios in central London, and John Mayall popped in to offer advice and encouragement as work proceeded. Opening number 'N.S.U.' is a Jack Bruce song whose title he explains has nothing to do with German mopeds. Clapton delights with his vibrant guitar work on Willie Dixon's 'Spoonful', Muddy Water's 'Rollin' And Tumblin', Robert Johnson's 'Four Until Late,' Skip James' 'I'm So Glad' and a pounding arrangement of 'Cat's Squirrel'.

Amid these tracks Eric utilizes string bending techniques and touches of feedback to great effect. A slow-paced 'Sleepy Time Time' has the guitar reaching out behind Jack Bruce's suspenseful vocals while Ginger Baker contributes 'Sweet Wine' and extended drum solo 'Toad'.

OPPOSITE Five lively Yardbirds performing in 1964.

THIS PAGE Cream in action on ITV's "Ready, Steady, Go!" in 1966.

It is a satisfying package, but the group thought it could have been better. Said Jack Bruce later: "The first recordings were done in such a rush I was amazed they came out as well as they did."

CREAM *DISRAELI GEARS* (REACTION UK ATCO US) 1967

During Cream's first visit to New York they fitted in two weeks' recording time at Atlantic's eight-track recording studio. Encouraged by Atlantic's president, the late Ahmet Ertegun, the group was placed in the hands of bass player-turned-producer Felix Pappalardi and engineer Tom Dowd. Here Cream develops their songwriting with important contributions from Eric, who takes his first steps into serious composition with the wailing 'Strange Brew' and 'Tales Of Brave Ulysses'. Eric makes good use of his new wah-wah pedal. Pete Brown and Jack Bruce contribute the blockbusting 'Sunshine Of Your Love', powered by Baker's distinctive drumming and the raunchy 'Take It Back'.

The album title came from a chance remark by the group's roadie Mick Turner, when discussing racing bicycles with Ginger. He allegedly said "Disraeli gears" when he meant "Derailleur gears". The phrase stuck and the album with its psychedelic cover became an instant classic.

CREAM *WHEELS OF FIRE* (POLYDOR UK ATCO US) 1968

In August 1967 Cream began a series of US tours that saw them on the road for a year, during which they had to fill out 90-minute shows with extended solos to make up for the lack of new material. However, audiences were thrilled to hear the maestros working their musical chemistry together. The Cream essence is captured on two live sides of the original double LP, which were compressed into a four-CD box set entitled *Those Were The Days* (Polydor) in 1997.

The two studio sides include the powerful 'White Room', a Jack Bruce/Pete Brown song with Jack taking the lead vocals and Clapton's guitar wah-wahing the haunting theme before breaking into an exciting landmark solo. Eric was back home, deep in the blues for the sombre 'Sitting On Top Of The World', sung by Jack with full fury. The menacing 'Politician', with its stomping drums and bass beat, is another Bruce/Brown standout track, while Eric provides sexual thrust with his guitar to the sultry 'Born Under A Bad Sign'.

The four extended live tracks took up sides three and four and were recorded at the Winterland Ballroom and at the Fillmore West, San Francisco in March 1968. Eric sings and plays his Robert Johnson favourite 'Crossroads' and a stunning version

ABOVE Cream in New York in 1967. During the trip they fitted in two weeks' recording time to create *Disraeli Gears*.

BELOW Cream go unplugged in 1968. Ginger Baker swaps his drums for congas and Eric goes acoustic.

RIGHT Eric Clapton warming up backstage at the Murray the K "Music in the Fifth Dimension" show in 1967.

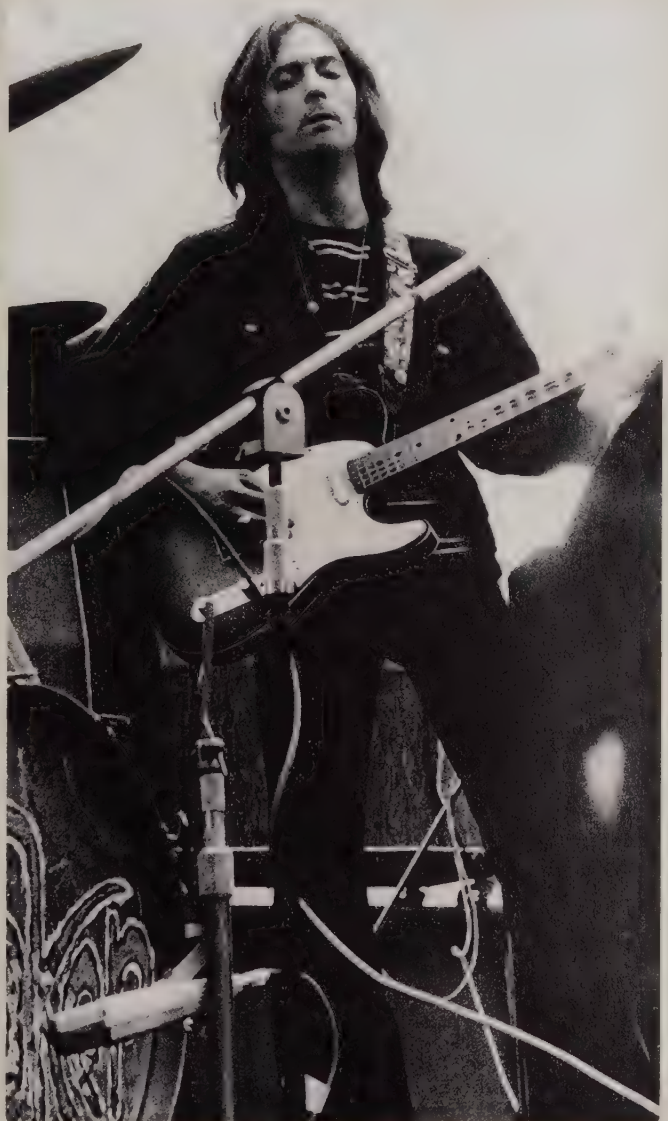
"I THINK THE 'BLIND FAITH" ALBUM IS A LOVELY RECORD. I LIKE ITS LOOSENESS. YOU CAN FEEL THERE IS A LOT OF LONGING IN THE BAND." ERIC CLAPTON

of 'Spoonful' taken at a slow and doomy tempo. Jack Bruce's vocals and harmonica playing are showcased on 'Traintime', supported by Baker's brisk brushes on the snare drum, and the drummer completes the LP with a 16-minute version of 'Toad'. More raw material from these concerts was included on *Live Cream Vol.1* 1970 and *Live Cream Vol.2* (both Polydor UK, Atco US) 1972.

BLIND FAITH *BLIND FAITH* (POLYDOR UK, ATCO US) 1969

Eric's post Cream dream was produced by Jimmy Miller and saw him liaising with Steve Winwood on just six tracks, which would represent the band's total output. Most of the songs are more poignant and less combative than Cream's psychedelic blues rock. Nevertheless Clapton's guitar is well represented on Steve's opening shot, 'Had To Cry Today', picking nimbly through the melody supported by Ric Grech's warm and friendly bass guitar. 'Can't Find My Way Home' is a pretty, acoustic treat, closer in spirit to Traffic and aided by surprisingly tasteful drumming from Ginger. The bass also boosts Eric and Stevie's revival of the old Buddy Holly hit 'Well All Right'.

Clapton's major contribution is 'Presence Of The Lord', a wonderful song with uplifting organ, piano and guitar chords and sung by Winwood with all the passion he used to put into 'Georgia' in his Spencer Davis days. Eric ups the pace for a wah-wah-driven interlude before returning to the decorum of the melody. The last two numbers comprise Winwood's 'Sea Of Joy', with Grech adding violin touches and Ginger's raison d'être, a drum solo on 'Do What You Like'. Blind Faith would receive greater appreciation with the passing years. If the group had spent more time in the studio and less on the road, it might have been a more successful project.



TOP Cream go for a cool boat trip in Central Park, New York.

ABOVE LEFT Cream conquered the rock world but parted company after three albums.

ABOVE Eric in action during Blind Faith's live debut at the famous Hyde Park concert.

CLAPTON GOES SOLO

DEREK AND THE DOMINOS & 'LAYLA'

In 1970, Eric Clapton faced the challenges of a new era and had to deal with difficult personal issues. Events seemed to overwhelm him. The first year of the new decade saw the Beatles' acrimonious break-up and the tragic death of Jimi Hendrix, leaving rock music adrift and rudderless.

It was also a time when the idealism of the hippie movement that flowered during the Summer of Love was tarnished by the Charles Manson murders in Los Angeles and violence at the Rolling Stones' Altamont concert in 1969. America seemed gripped by crime and hatred instead of love and peace and a despondent mood spilled over into the wider world of music.

Blind Faith had proved a touring debacle, even though Eric loved the songs on what had, after all, been a Number One hit album. Then came an unfriendly audience reaction to his venture with Delaney & Bonnie, when he had taken a back seat at their shows, trying to shake off the mantle of stardom. He grew resentful at the expectations of audiences, who still saw him as the guitar god purveyor of 'Crossroads' and 'Steppin' Out'.

In his private life Eric had formed a romantic obsession with Pattie Boyd, the wife of his best friend George Harrison, which caused him considerable anguish. The beautiful model had married Harrison in 1966 having first met him as a young girl on the set of the Beatles movie *A Hard Day's Night*, in which she had a small part as a fan. A rising star in the world of modelling, she was photographed by David Bailey and appeared on the cover of *Vogue* magazine. Clapton was smitten, but she rebuffed his advances and stayed with Harrison. This compounded a growing sense of frustration for Eric, which would eventually fuel a descent into drug addiction. His feelings towards her were famously expressed in the lyrics of one of his best loved and most successful songs, 'Layla'.

In March 1970 Eric began recording a solo album in Los Angeles with Leon Russell and members of the Delaney & Bonnie touring band. It was produced by Delaney Bramlett, who took pains to assure Clapton that he could sing and should develop his talents in that direction. The album was released in August and titled simply *Eric Clapton*. The music had a rough and ready "white soul" feel and Eric was pictured on the album's rear sleeve photograph smartly suited, long haired, bearded and somehow detached from the rest of the musicians, who included Leon Russell and Stephen Stills. Several numbers were written with Bramlett such as 'Slunky' and 'Bottle Of Red Wine'. Their version of the J.J. Cale song 'After Midnight' was released as a single in October.

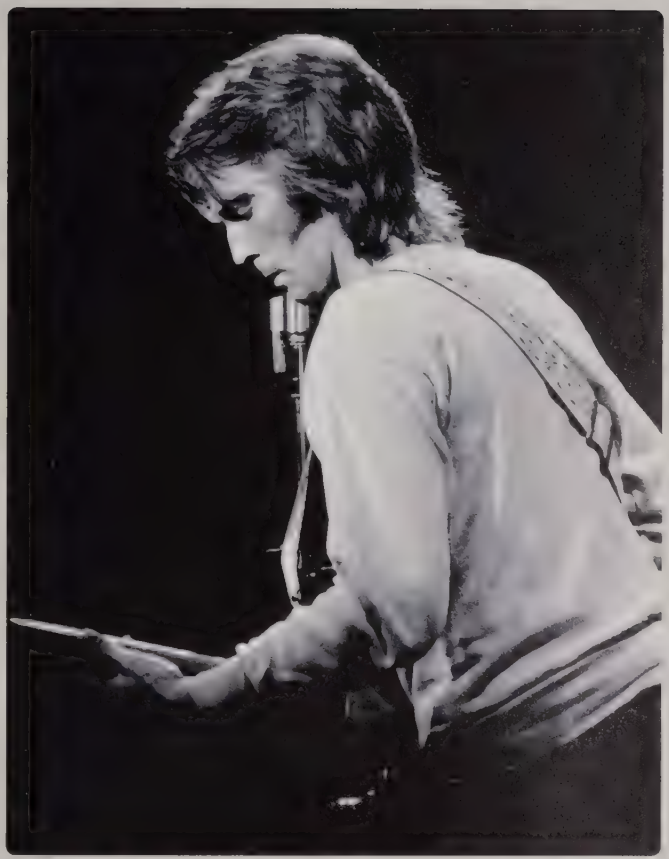
Although eagerly anticipated, the album appeared to Clapton fans to lack identity and seemed dominated by Bramlett's influence. As a result Eric's debut was deemed a disappointment and even failed to get into the Top 10 album chart. At this point Clapton's British fans had begun to desert him.

Eric now formed his own band of American musicians. He still appeared anxious to distance himself from Cream-style fame. As a joke he called his new group Derek and the Dominos. When promoters and the public became confused by the billing, badges were hastily produced assuring everyone that "Derek Is Eric". The Dominos included Bobby Whitlock (keyboards), Carl Radle (bass guitar) and Jim Gordon (drums). They made their debut at the Lyceum Ballroom in London on June 14, 1970. The occasion was a benefit show for the Dr. Spock Civil Liberties Defence Fund and was initially advertised as "Eric Clapton and Friends".

They were announced as "Derek and the Dominos", apparently at the behest of organist Tony Ashton, of Ashton, Gardner & Dyke. He had suggested they should be called "Del and the Dominos" as "Del" was Ashton's nickname for Eric. They might even have been called "Ricky and the Dominos", as that was the name close friends and family members used. Eric appeared onstage clean-shaven, well dressed and clutching a Fender Stratocaster. He was in a good mood, relaxed and smiling and even played 'Crossroads' to placate the fans. More shows followed as the band set off on a UK tour in August, charging only £1 admission to club venues like the Dagenham Roundhouse and the Marquee, London.

By then Clapton was huffy towards some audiences, especially when they kept shouting out for old Cream numbers. Their final date on the tour was at the Birmingham Town Hall where Led Zeppelin's Robert Plant appeared onstage hoping to sing a number with Eric, only to be removed by a zealous road manager.

In August Clapton flew to Miami, Florida to start work on the double album *Layla And Other Assorted Love Songs* (Polydor UK, Atco US). It was produced by Tom Dowd at the behest of Eric's manager Robert Stigwood. Dowd had wanted to work with Clapton again since their *Disraeli Gears* days. The new album featured Eric's discovery Duane Allman



OPPOSITE Thinking about the future – a portrait taken in his manager Robert Stigwood's office in 1970.

ABOVE LEFT Eric breaks free and "goes solo". Despite being hampered by personal issues, Clapton was now a global star.

ABOVE Now with hits to his name, Clapton, the reluctant centre of attention, performs in October 1970.

guesting on guitar. Eric had heard Duane playing with the Allman Brothers and was swept away. Tom Dowd had actually been working with the Allman Brothers at the Atlantic South Criteria Studios, producing their second album *Idlewild South*. When Clapton arrived in Miami, he went off with Dowd to see the Allmans performing at an open-air gig and was hugely impressed. Duane was made welcome at Clapton's sessions and they began rehearsing and trading licks and ideas.

'Layla', complete with Duane Allman's dramatic fanfare introduction, was released as a single in November 1970, coupled with 'Bell Bottom Blues', and the album followed in December. Despite being played by DJs in London clubs, 'Layla' was not an immediate hit, a cause of great disappointment for Eric. Clapton was also stunned by the sudden death of Jimi Hendrix on September 18, 1970.

Despite a certain professional rivalry that occurred when the Hendrix Experience seemed to be stealing Cream's thunder back in 1967, the pair had become close friends. Jimi had once said he'd come to England only if he could meet Eric Clapton. The tragedy occurred just a few days after Clapton's band had recorded their cover version of Hendrix's song 'Little Wing' for the Dominos album. Eric had even bought a guitar intended as a gift for Jimi, on the day of his death.

Some six weeks after Jimi's demise, the Dominos went on a US tour that proved very difficult. They opened at the Fillmore East in Manhattan, a run-down old theatre run by promoter Bill Graham. (The once-famous rock venue is long closed and is now the HQ of a bank). Clapton's New York fans cheered, but the music press critics were not impressed and deemed the band's performances "boring".

Some of the other venues on the tour were only half full and quite a few people walked out during the gigs, unimpressed. Matters were not helped by the fact that the album had not yet been released and few in America knew who "Derek" was, or else they didn't get the joke. It wasn't a happy time and Eric then had to fly home to deal with the illness of his grandfather John Clapp, who died from cancer shortly afterwards aged 60.

Even though the album and 'Layla' single appeared to flop in the charts, Clapton's single 'After Midnight' got to Number 18 in the US chart in December. Thereafter Eric seemed to lose interest in the Dominos and retreated back to his Surrey home and into self-imposed exile. In February 1971 he announced he was giving up live appearances for a while in order to "take stock".

The group broke up in April 1971, having abandoned attempts to record a second album. It was hoped they might reconvene but the members began to realize it was never going to happen. Much later a commemorative double LP set *Derek and the Dominos in Concert*, recorded at the Fillmore East in November 1970, appeared in March 1973.

Eric now seemed to be caught in a trap of heroin addiction – as I will discuss later – and would not surface for another three years. He stayed home with his girlfriend, Lord Harlech's daughter, Alice Ormsby-Gore. He rarely went out or answered the telephone and a system of ringing codes was used for anyone important to get through.

The fate of the remaining Dominos was not a happy one, either. Their good-looking, highly regarded drummer Jim Gordon had been one of Los Angeles' busiest session players before teaming up with Delaney & Bonnie and Clapton. He later played with George Harrison, Joe Cocker, Steely Dan and Frank Zappa until his mental state prevented him from playing drums. Sadly it transpired he was an undiagnosed schizophrenic who had begun hearing voices in his head. In 1983 he attacked and killed his own mother with a hammer and a knife. He was sentenced to life imprisonment in a Californian high security unit.

Carl Radle also played with Joe Cocker, Dave Mason and George Harrison and continued working with Clapton as arranger and bass player in his band throughout the Seventies. But the rock lifestyle and heavy drinking took their toll and Carl died in May 1980 from a kidney infection.

However, organist Bobby Whitlock, who co-wrote with Eric 'Why Does Love Got To Be So Sad?' on the *Layla...* album continued his career, recording solo albums, hosting his own TV show and writing material for Tom Jones and Ray Charles before settling in Austin, Texas. Remembering his days with the Dominos and their failure to produce a second album, Whitlock said: "That second album should never have been started. The writing was on the wall for us. Only Eric and I made it to the other side. Eric was not meant to be a band member. He was meant to be 'Eric Clapton' a front man and a leader and a bright, shining star."

SITTING IN

GUEST STARRING WITH LENNON, HARRISON AND FRIENDS

"Can I sit in with the band?" Most musicians actively dislike the idea of an interloper getting up onstage and attempting to play along with their group. They know his or her presence will disrupt the performance and may even damage precious instruments. But Eric Clapton is one man everyone welcomes with delight. They know Eric will add lustre to proceedings and bring the house down with loud applause from appreciative audiences.

As a result the guitarist has found himself an honoured guest with artists galore over the years and has been a regular fixture at important occasions from charity shows to rock's most historic special events. A gala production was incomplete without E.C. appearing in the wings with a hesitant smile and his guitar at the ready.

In December 1968 Eric was recruited to appear in *The Rolling Stones Rock and Roll Circus*, an adventurous idea by Mick Jagger filmed in colour and intended for television. Artists including the Who, Jethro Tull, Taj Mahal and the Stones assembled at a studio in Wembley, London on December 11, 1968 under the direction of Michael Lindsay-Hogg. Filming went on all day, capturing a fun performance by a group with John Lennon, Keith Richard, Clapton and drummer Mitch Mitchell. They played Beatles tune 'Yer Blues' and Clapton's face was a picture when Yoko Ono joined in with her wordless screaming.

Eric jammed again in a filmed session that took place over two days in March 1969 in a factory in Staines, to the west of London. A remarkable gathering of disparate jazz and rock talents was assembled, including Led Zeppelin, Stephen Stills, the MJQ, Roland Kirk, Buddy Guy and Clapton. Eric played in a pick-up group with Roland Kirk on saxophone, Jon Hiseman on drums and Jack Bruce on bass guitar.

Later in the year, Eric was urgently sought by John Lennon to take part in a group he was assembling for an appearance at the Toronto Rock & Roll Revival festival. John was to be Master of Ceremonies, but told the organizers he would sooner perform with his own Plastic Ono Band featuring Eric, John and Yoko Ono, Klaus Voormann (bass) and Alan White (drums). Lennon's assistant had great difficulty trying to locate Eric in time for a 10 a.m. flight from Heathrow to Toronto on September 13, the day of the concert. A telegram was sent to his home at Hurtwood Edge. It turned out Clapton had been asleep and hadn't heard his phone ringing. He raced to the airport but, having missed the 10 a.m. flight, the party took a later one in the afternoon and rehearsed their set quietly at the back of the plane.

They had to play in the huge Varsity stadium on a bill with Chuck Berry, Bo Diddley, Gene Vincent and Little Richard. Understandably Lennon and Clapton were extremely nervous. Eric had not played since Blind Faith and it would be John's first live appearance since the Beatles in 1966. Nevertheless the show turned out very well, fuelled by adrenaline and the love of good old rock'n'roll.

A bearded Eric wore a blue denim jacket and jeans with a cigarette pasted between his lips. John, in a white suit, with long hair and beard announced: "We're just gonna do some numbers we know, as we've never played together before." Eric steamed into his fastest rock'n'roll licks since Yardbirds days on 'Blue Suede Shoes', 'Money', 'Dizzy Miss Lizzy', as well as 'Yer Blues', the slow Beatles blues pastiche Eric and John had played on the Stones' *Circus* film. 'Cold Turkey' and 'Give Peace A Chance' completed the best of the tracks later released on *Live Peace In Toronto 1969* (Apple) in December 1969 and also captured in a documentary film by D.A. Pennebaker.

Eric was next recruited by another former Beatle when George Harrison asked him to play at the all-star Concert For Bangladesh at New York's Madison Square Garden on August 1, 1971, organized by George with Ravi Shankar to raise funds for victims of war. This time Clapton played alongside Bob Dylan, Leon Russell, Billy Preston and Ringo Starr.

Over the coming years Eric would be involved in many collaborations with diverse artists from Jeff Beck and Jimmy Page, to Roger Waters and Phil Collins, and take part in star-studded events such as the Prince's Trust Gala concerts with Paul McCartney, Elton John, Rod Stewart and Tina Turner. Even if it took a mad dash to make the gig on time, he'd never let his band mates down.

ABOVE Under the big top. Eric (third right from Jagger) at the "Rolling Stones' Rock and Roll Circus".

LEFT John Lennon recruits "God" as his guitarist. They were to become great friends.

OPPOSITE (ABOVE LEFT) Clapton performing with Beatle George Harrison at the all-star Concert for Bangladesh in 1971.

OPPOSITE (ABOVE RIGHT) Eric looks on in admiration as he jams with legendary bluesman Robert Cray.

OPPOSITE Eric, Mitch Mitchell, John Lennon and Keith Richards at the "Circus".

"THE PLASTIC ONO BAND GIG WITH JOHN LENNON WAS EXCELLENT AND I LIKED THE ALBUM. IT WAS A BLIND FAITH THING THAT PAID OFF." ERIC CLAPTON

LOVE, EXILE AND A RAINBOW RETURN

CLAPTON'S BATTLE THROUGH ADDICTION AND ISOLATION

Eric Clapton, "the bright, shining star", had succumbed to what soul icon James Brown would describe as "One of the most deadly killers in the country today." He was talking about 'King Heroin' in an anti-drugs song Brown released as a single in 1972. But that message was too late for Eric who had become addicted to the drug, taking a path that led to exile and isolation.

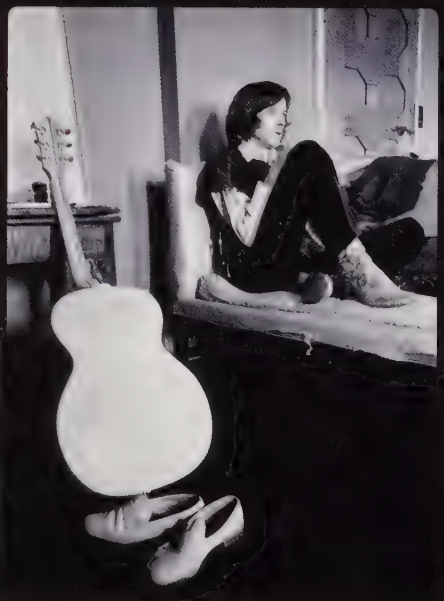
The dark days began in December 1970 and would last until the start of 1973. During that time he stayed at Hurtwood Edge, his Surrey home, worn out by touring and devastated by the loss of friends, including Jimi Hendrix and Duane Allman, who died after a motorcycle accident in October 1971. Friends and family members would visit Eric in an attempt to understand why he'd got into such a state. There was no real answer except that drugs provided an escape. He had become hooked on heroin almost by accident: it had been available during the time drug-using associates were allowed to stay at his house.

He later offered some explanation for his behaviour. He confessed he was naturally an "addictive personality" whose inclinations could manifest themselves in different ways. At least his most important obsession with music wasn't forgotten. While most callers were turned away, he still got out of bed to play his acoustic guitar and work on songs, recording them on cassette for later use. Domestically he was looked after by girlfriend, Alice Ormsby-Gore, who had been living with him since 1969. But despite their close relationship, inwardly Clapton still harboured a yearning for Pattie Boyd.

One musician was determined to encourage Clapton back to work. Pete Townshend had got to know his fellow guitarist in the days when the Who and Cream shared a billing on the Murray The K Show. Pete became a frequent visitor, usually at Alice's behest. One day Eric phoned Townshend and asked him if he'd come and help with some recording. As they chatted, Eric confessed to Pete that he'd become an addict. It was a first step on the road to recovery.

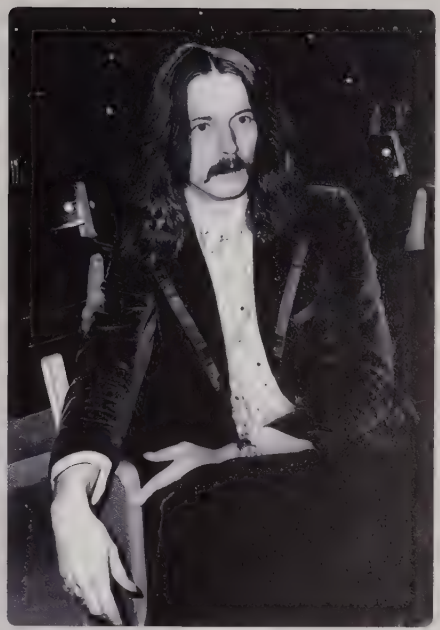
"I HAVEN'T REALLY DONE ANYTHING WITH MY LIFE" ERIC CLAPTON

Alice's father Lord Harlech asked Townshend if he could organize a special concert in aid of a charity he supported, with the aim of getting Clapton to top the bill. Townshend began to recruit musicians, including former Blind Faith colleagues Steve Winwood and Ric Grech, together with Ronnie Wood (guitar) and Jim Capaldi (drums). Eric impressed them all with his readiness to take charge of the rehearsals over 10 days at Ronnie Wood's house. The show was scheduled to take place at the Rainbow Theatre, in Finsbury Park, London on January 13, 1973.



FAR LEFT The Master of Hurtwood Edge. Clapton poses outside his Surrey residence.

LEFT Clapton struggled with drugs and depression in the early 1970s. With the help of friends he was able to come out the other side.



It was formerly the Astoria Cinema, where the Beatles had played and Jimi Hendrix had once set fire to his guitar onstage. The Rainbow seemed a positive, colourful symbol of hope for Clapton.

On the night of the show there was tension as fellow musicians and an expectant audience wondered whether Eric could pull it off and even if he could still play. He appeared with a heavy beard and in a white suit and launched into familiar numbers such as 'Badge' and 'Presence Of The Lord'. His playing was deemed good enough, if not brilliant. More importantly, the event marked a successful return to the public gaze and the two shows that night were recorded for an album, *Eric Clapton's Rainbow Concert* (RSO), released in September 1973.

In the aftermath of the Rainbow shows, it seemed Eric underwent a relapse back into addiction but received treatment and therapy at a clinic and also spent time on a farm in Wales to restore his health and confidence. In April 1974 a press conference was organized by Eric's manager Robert Stigwood at London's China Garden Chinese restaurant to announce Eric's comeback. Elton John and Pete Townshend were among the celebrity guests. It was crowded with reporters and Eric ended up sitting on the stairs, where he talked about the future. He looked fit and well, although still hesitant about committing himself to detailed plans. However, they included flying to Miami to form a new band with bass player Carl Radle and recording a new album. "I want to record again and do a tour of America. I'm feeling well and I'm a really happy man!"

Eric thanked Townshend for helping him out of hibernation and wanted to make amends for all the wasted time. "I haven't really done anything with my life" he said, sadly. Now he could re-start that life and career with renewed energy. The results would be spectacular.

> "I WANT TO RECORD AGAIN AND DO A TOUR OF AMERICA. I'M FEELING WELL AND I'M A REALLY HAPPY MAN." ERIC CLAPTON

ABOVE LEFT Rainbow warriors (left to right): Wood, Eric, Grech and Townshend at the Rainbow Theatre in 1973.

ABOVE A drawn-looking Eric Clapton in 1971. Despite his addiction issues, he never stopped playing and writing.

BELOW The Rainbow Theatre concert marked a successful return for Clapton. He was soon to restart his career.

A NEW CONFIDENCE

CHART SUCCESS WITH A FRESH, GROUND-BREAKING SOUND

By early 1974, Eric Clapton had a spring in his step. He had undergone acupuncture treatment for his addiction problems and, following the success of the Rainbow Theatre concert, was ready to start rebuilding his confidence and career. Health restored, Eric flew to Florida and began recording the songs that would ensure a place back in the spotlight and in the charts.

He had considered reforming Derek and the Dominos but instead accepted the help of former Dominos bass guitarist Carl Radle, who had formed a ready-made group for Eric to use in the studio. It would include Radle, together with Dick Sims (keyboards), George Terry (guitar), Jamie Oldaker (drums) and Yvonne Elliman (vocals). They would be the basis of Eric's regular band for the next four years.

Sessions took place at the Criteria Recording Studios, Miami with producer Tom Dowd. Among the songs Eric had ready to record were the compositions 'Give Me Strength' and 'Please Be With Me' by country artist Charles Scott Boyer. Eric was still feeling uncertain how to proceed with his new band but quickly recorded as much as possible and handed the results over to Tom Dowd to finesse. The result was *461 Ocean Boulevard* (RSO) released in August 1974.

A highly successful album with an emphasis on melodic songs rather than heavy guitar work, it established Clapton as a pleasantly individual singer who could reach out to a wider audience. Clapton, Radle and Dowd were rewarded for their efforts when one of the tracks, 'I Shot The Sheriff', was a big hit and got to Number 1 in the *Billboard* chart. It was Eric's first US hit since 'Layla' in 1972. His lively cover version of the Bob Marley song also peaked at Number 9 in the UK. There was more good news when another album track, 'Willie And The Hand Jive', got to Number 26 in *Billboard* in November 1974.

Eric had been introduced to Marley's album Burnin' by George Terry who encouraged him to get into the reggae rhythms then galvanizing the music scene. (Clapton and Marley would eventually meet, and established friendly relations. Eric's success with 'I Shot The Sheriff' helped bring reggae to the mainstream. But Bob Marley And The Wailers would have to wait until 1975 before their 'No Woman, No Cry' was a hit single in the UK.)

461 Ocean Boulevard was the address of the house where Clapton's musicians resided during the making of the bestselling album. It provided a friendly environment where the guitarist could bond with his new partners. The success of the venture was particularly welcome for manager and father figure Robert Stigwood, who had stood by his artist since the days of Cream. Robert would continue to manage Eric's affairs until 1979, when Roger Forrester, who worked as Stigwood's agent, took over as Clapton's personal manager.

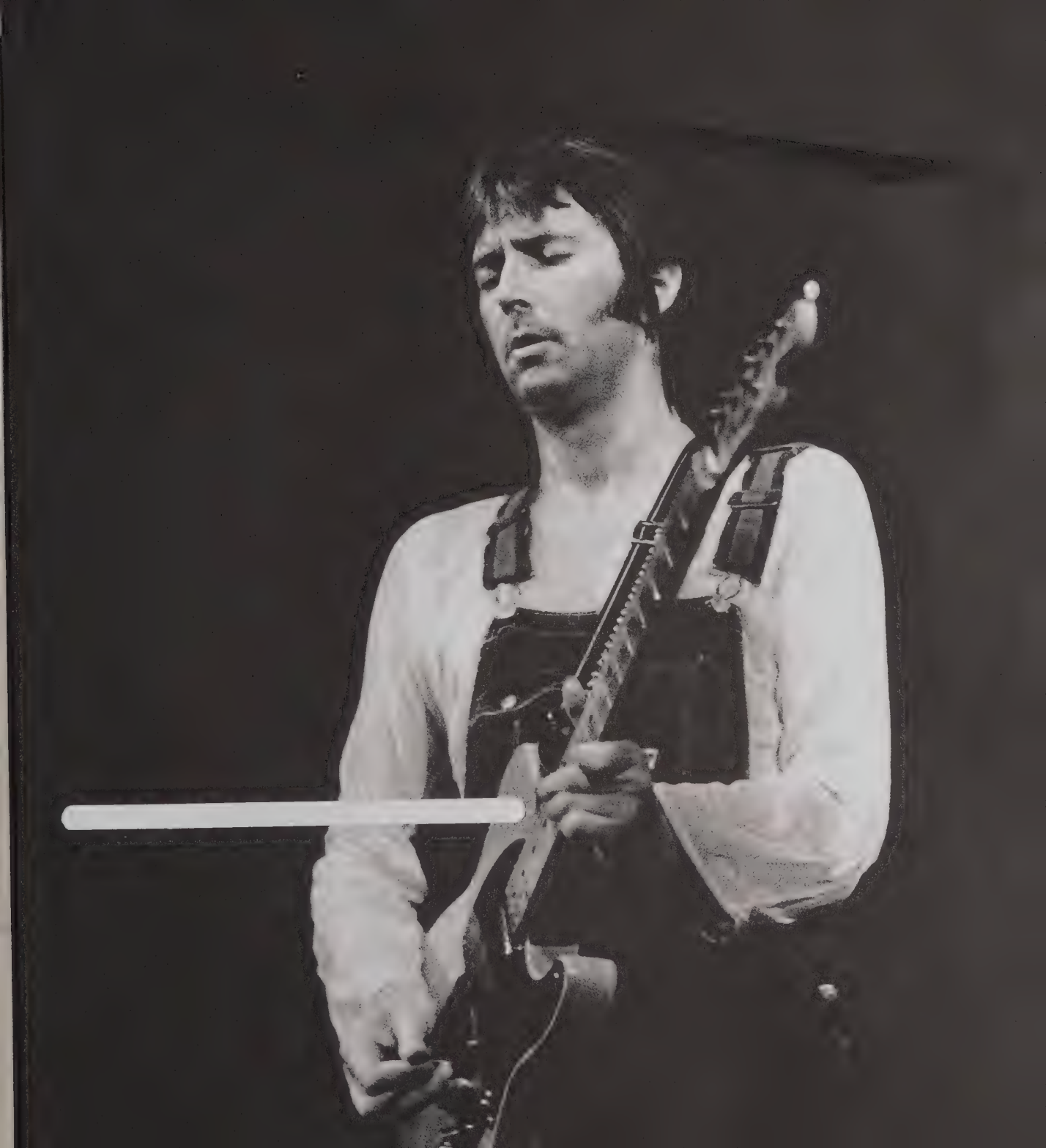
Eric Clapton and his band set off on a massive 461... US tour in 1974 that put quite a strain on his stamina. He was expected to perform in large sports stadiums to audiences of up to 70,000 and sometimes did two shows a night. He coped with the pressure by drinking heavily and trying to make light of his starring role, dressing in ill-fitting dungarees and appearing dishevelled. It seemed like an act of rebellion, but he admitted later he was just having fun.

He certainly enjoyed a lot of amusement during a warm-up trip to Stockholm and Denmark in June 1974. In Copenhagen, Eric and the band visited a sex club where E.C.

had fun blowing duck calls, shouting abuse and upsetting the performers. The party atmosphere was enhanced by the inclusion of "Legs" Larry Smith from the Bonzo Dog Band, who came on board as the tour's court jester, tap dancer and compère. Although the first two Scandinavian gigs were somewhat shambolic, with Eric singing in the wrong key and relying on George Terry to hold the band together, it was understandable. Their equipment turned up late and they'd had little rehearsal time. The mostly stoned Danish audience enjoyed themselves as much as the band.

By the time the Anglo-American party dudes got to the US for their 26-week, 23-date tour, Eric was drinking heavily but the band was coming together. There was more good news when Pattie Boyd, having finally left George Harrison, flew to the States to accompany Eric on the rest of the tour. Clapton was happy and the band was on good form when they played their most important gig at Madison Square Garden. Mick Jagger and Greg Allman were in the boisterous New York audience and Todd Rundgren came onstage to join in the encore.

In August, before completing the second part of his US tour, Clapton and the band went to Kingston, Jamaica to record the next album with Tom Dowd, later released under the title



ENCLOSURES

ITEM 10

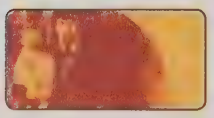
A poster showing Eric Clapton sat in front of a stack of Marshall amplifiers during a soundcheck in 1967.

ITEM 11

A rare personal invitation to "The Rolling Stones' Rock and Roll Circus" when Clapton played alongside John Lennon, Mick Jagger, Keith Richards, and a host of other music legends in December 1968.

ITEM 12

Blind Faith made their debut at Hyde Park in June 1969. The flyer photograph shows the supergroup relaxing at Eric's country home.

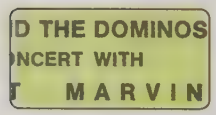


ITEM 13

George Harrison and Eric Clapton's are two of the signatures on this autographed Delaney & Bonnie flyer.

ITEM 14

A hand-drawn flyer advertising Derek and the Dominos' performance at Torquay Town Hall in August 1970.



ITEM 15

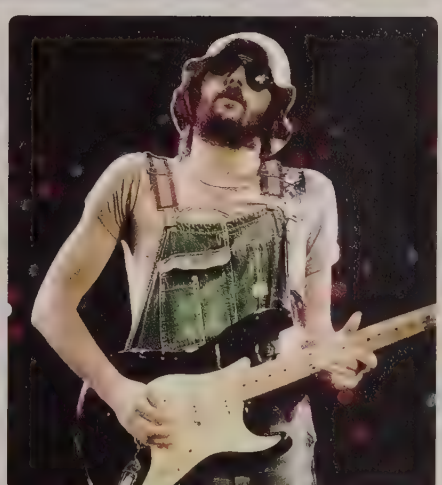
Eric was "Derek" when he played Glasgow's famed Playhouse in September 1970. The venue later became The Apollo, before closing in 1985 and being demolished after a fire in 1987.

OPPOSITE Clapton performing at the Nassau Coliseum, Long Island, New York in June 1974.

ABOVE Warming up and ready to rock. Eric Clapton in shades, 1974.

RIGHT Clapton posing outside the house from the cover of *461 Ocean Boulevard*. Its address? 461 Ocean Boulevard.

FAR RIGHT E.C. dressed down and armed with Fender Strat "Blackie" and wailing at the Cow Palace, San Francisco, in July 1974.



There's One In Every Crowd in April 1975. After their US dates Clapton went to Japan, with singer Marcy Levy joining the team. Japanese fans mobbed Eric and were especially excited when he added 'Layla' to the set.

Back in England, the local audience was less welcoming when the band played just two shows at the Odeon Hammersmith, London on December 4. There was heckling and occasional shouts of abuse, probably from loutish touts who often attend such shows, using up their own unsold tickets. The mood was lightened when Ronnie Wood of the Faces joined Clapton onstage for a jam on their usual encore number 'Little Queenie'.

At the end of 1974 Clapton was advised to move out of England for tax reasons and he

> "THE 'SHERIFF' TRACK WAS SUCH A WEIRD MELTING POT. THE ONLY WAY I COULD STAMP MY PERSONALITY ONTO IT WAS TO SING IT." ERIC CLAPTON

and Pattie rented a home in the Bahamas. From there Eric went on to tour Australia and New Zealand. Although *There's One In Every Crowd* was not as critically popular as *461 Ocean Boulevard*, it got to Number 15 in the UK album charts and Number 21 in the US. It also yielded a hit single when a version of 'Swing Low, Sweet Chariot' was Number 19 in the UK in May 1975.

During the Seventies Clapton was still getting used to the idea of being perceived as a pop musician, which meant hit singles in the charts but also the need to present an appropriate image. At heart, however, he remained a blues man with a rock heritage to cope with and it wasn't always easy for him to balance the demands and expectations of his audience.

Despite persistent drinking he remained committed to touring and recording and released a string of albums such as *E.C. Was Here* (RSO) 1975, *No Reason To Cry* (RSO) 1976, *Slowhand* (RSO) 1977 and *Backless (*RSO) 1978. These LPs spawned a string of hit singles, among them a version of Bob Dylan's 'Knockin' On Heaven's Door', a Top 40 hit in the UK in August 1975. 'Hello Old Friend' got to Number 24 in the US *Billboard* chart in November 1976 and his biggest US hit of the late Seventies, 'Lay Down Sally' from *Slowhand,* shot to Number 3 in February 1978. Later that year he would enjoy a hit with the beautiful 'Wonderful Tonight', a love song written for Pattie Boyd, whom he finally married after some encouragement from his manager, in Tucson, Arizona on March 27, 1979. The single got to Number 16 in *Billboard.*

In 1976 Clapton embarked on his first UK tour, since the days of Derek and the Dominos. He played mainly seaside resorts and even appeared at a Warner's Holiday Camp on Hayling Island as part of a move to celebrate his perceived English working class roots, which included adopting a Cockney, Chas & Dave style, accent. But he also performed at bigger venues like Glasgow Apollo and Manchester Belle Vue. A special concert at the Crystal Palace Bowl in South London featured Eric with guest guitarists Freddie King, Larry Coryell and Ronnie Wood. On August 5, he played at the Odeon, Birmingham where, having had a few too many drinks, he made remarks about immigration that caused considerable controversy and which he later regretted.

OPPOSITE Clapton performing at the Ahoy, Rotterdam in 1974 during his 461 Ocean Boulevard European Tour.

ABOVE Eric and "Blackie", old pals making sweet music together in November 1974.

TOP RIGHT Clapton was over his heroin addiction but still drinking to excess.

FAR RIGHT Together at last: Eric would wed Pattie Boyd in March 1979. She was the inspiration for his hit record 'Wonderful Tonight'.

RIGHT Working hard in the studio. Clapton records *No Reason To Cry* at the Shangri La recording studio in Malibu, California, in 1975.

In the summer of 1977 Eric continued touring with American musicians and tried to make life easier by travelling around Europe on a private train with support act Ronnie Lane's Slim Chance. It was fun to have some British mates on board, and later Eric introduced guitarist Albert Lee to the fold. Albert arrived in January 1979 to replace George Terry, who had quit the group after recording *Backless*. By then Marcy Levy and Yvonne Elliman had also left. Eventually Clapton decided to part company from Carl Radle and the American guys he'd worked with since 461 Ocean Boulevard.

In March 1979 Clapton began a world tour with an all-British outfit comprising Albert Lee (guitar), Chris Stainton (keyboards), Dave Markee (bass) and Henry Spinetti (drums). During a trip to Japan they recorded *Just One Night* (RSO) a live double album at the Budokan Theatre, Tokyo in December 1979. Released in May 1980, it was the first showcasing Eric's new band.

Now Eric was all set to face the Eighties, a decade when the music scene, already reeling from punk rock, faced even more changes in musical styles, fashion and technology. Clapton would thrive, his faith and interest in the blues rekindled by working with Muddy Waters during a US tour. A smarter, more focused Clapton was about to emerge.

A TRAVELIN' MAN

A MUSIC LEGEND AND HIS GUITARS

Lonely men roaming in search of love with just a guitar to keep them company has long been a romantic theme in popular music. Teen idol Ricky Nelson had a Number One hit with 'Travelin' Man' in 1961, which struck a chord with young folk eager to leave home and hit the road. But it was the hardcore blues of Robert Johnson and songs like 'Traveling Riverside Blues' and 'Crossroads Blues' that appealed more to the hobo spirit in the youthful Eric Clapton.

Early groups like the Roosters and Casey Jones & The Engineers gave him a taste of life as a wandering musician. Even then he was quite happy to perform alone as a busker at pubs or parties, casually earning enough money to buy drinks and guitar strings. The theme was celebrated again when he recorded 'Travellin' Alone' by blues pioneer Melvin "Lil' Son" Jackson on the critically acclaimed 2010 album *Clapton*.

It could be said Clapton's closest companions over a 50-year career have been his beloved guitars. After he acquired a Kay "Red Devil" electric guitar in 1962 he developed an association with the instrument that would take on an almost mystical significance, certainly in the minds of his admirers. The guitars he played seemed to hold the key to his unique sound, although many considered this to be as much due to Clapton's own skill and technique. Certainly the quest for the ultimate guitar resulted in the accumulation of a treasure like hoard that would take on even more importance when it came time to put sentiment aside and bid them farewell.

Clapton divided his guitar loyalties between two of America's most celebrated guitar brands with occasional forays into rival makes. With the Yardbirds he played a red Fender Telecaster but also used a Gretsch Chet Atkins 6120 double cutaway guitar and later switched to a Cherry Red Gibson ES-335. He used a Telecaster when he joined John Mayall's Bluesbreakers, but when recording the *Blues Breakers With Eric Clapton* album in 1966 he played a 1960 Sunburst Gibson Les Paul Standard that he described as "magnificent" and which was subsequently stolen. Using the Gibson fitted with Humbucker pick-ups and a 50-watt Marshall amplifier with 4 x 12 speaker cabinet enabled Clapton to obtain the powerful sound on such numbers as 'All Your Love', 'Hideaway', 'Steppin' Out' and 'Have You Heard.'

He continued to play a replacement Gibson Les Paul with a 100-watt stack with Cream, then he bought a 1964 Gibson SG Standard painted in psychedelic colours in 1967 by The Fool, two Dutch artists who worked for the Beatles. In 1968 Eric purchased a 1963 Gibson Firebird and used a Cherry Red Gibson ES-335 at Cream's farewell shows at the Royal Albert Hall and with Blind Faith in 1969, although he played a Fender Telecaster Custom at that year's concert in Hyde Park. The Fender he dubbed "Brownie" was heard on his Eric Clapton album in 1970.

Clapton bought six Stratocasters when visiting a music store in Nashville, Tennessee in 1970. After giving three of them away he took vital parts of the remaining Fenders to be reassembled into one guitar known as "Blackie". Eric carried on playing this legendary guitar until 1985 when he proclaimed it was worn out and duly "retired" it.

LEFT Clapton's Torino red Fender Stratocaster.
BELOW LEFT A Martin acoustic guitar, as used in Clapton's 1992 *Unplugged* album.

ABOVE Clapton's army of guitars. In 1999 he sold a number at auction, the proceeds going to his Crossroads charity.

BELOW Clapton's Gibson Custom ES. The ES was used by some of E.C.'s biggest influences, such as Chuck Berry and B.B. King.

In 1988 Fender introduced the Signature Eric Clapton Strat guitar in honour of their most valued customer.

Over the years Clapton accumulated an impressive and valuable collection of guitars, plus Martin acoustics, that represented all the hard work and emotional experiences of his life as a musician. However, in 1999 he was generous enough to part with them in order to raise money to support a charity project, the Crossroads Centre in Antigua. Eric had set up the facility in 1997 to help those suffering from alcohol and drug addiction. It cost a lot to run and he auctioned part of his guitar collection, raising some $5 million in the process.

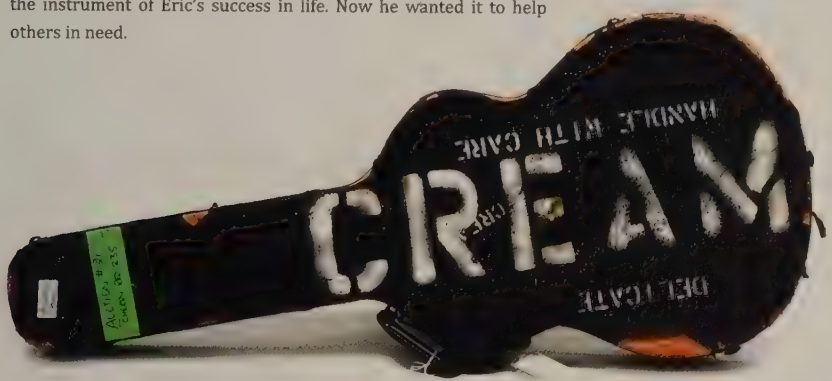
In 2004 he organized the Crossroads Guitar Festival, and a second guitar auction held at Christie's, New York in June raised more than $7 million for the Centre. At a further auction in 2010 Clapton sold the guitar he used during the 2005 Cream reunion and guitars donated by other musicians, including Jeff Beck and J.J. Cale. Then, in March 2011 Eric raised another $2 million when he sold many more items of memorabilia, including a replica of his "Blackie" Fender Strat. The guitar had been the instrument of Eric's success in life. Now he wanted it to help others in need.

RIGHT "Blackie", built from a number of guitars purchased at Sho-Bud guitar store in Nashville, Tennessee. This hybrid Fender Stratocaster is now one of the world's most famous guitars.

BELOW RIGHT A guitar pick from one of Clapton's 1970s tours to Australia.

LEFT The guitar case of Eric Clapton's Gibson ES-335. There's no mistaking his band at the time!

BELOW LEFT Eric performing with the iconic "Blackie" in 1970.



CLAPTON'S ALBUMS

THE SEVENTIES

Encouraged by Delaney Bramlett, Clapton began to emphasize his role as a relaxed singer and guitarist during the 1970s. There were peaks and troughs as he searched for a satisfying musical direction, but exploring different genres from gospel to country and reggae was an important, productive exercise. During a hectic decade he enjoyed big hits and wrote some of his finest songs, including 'Layla' and 'Wonderful Tonight.'

ERIC CLAPTON (POLYDOR) 1970

Eric and his American friends propel themselves into laid-back but rockin' grooves, giving Clapton a new life after Cream. Produced by Delaney Bramlett and featuring brass and keyboards, *Eric Clapton* has less emphasis on lead guitar, but it's an album that matures with the years, like fine wine. Good time performances 'Blues Power', J.J.Cale's 'After Midnight' and Clapton/Bramlett collaborations 'Bottle Of Red Wine' and 'Let It Rain' are among the uplifting highlights.

DEREK AND THE DOMINOS *LAYLA AND OTHER ASSORTED LOVE SONGS* (POLYDOR) 1970

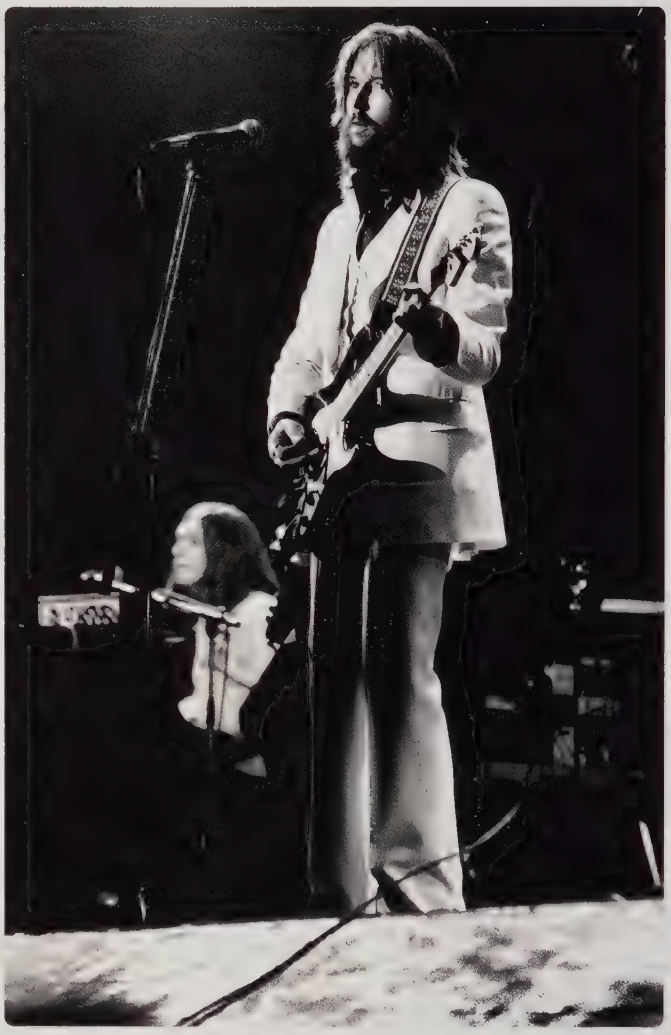
Although 'Layla' weaves its magic over a double album that eventually won the hearts of Clapton fans, there is much else to enjoy. Clapton's appealing vocal power is unleashed on 'I Looked Away' and 'Bell Bottom Blues', the latter enriched by the poignant declaration 'If I could choose a place to die it would be within your arms' . Anyone desperate for Clapton as blues maestro would be delighted by the grinding 'Have You Ever Loved A Woman' and a courteous bow to Jimi Hendrix with his version of 'Little Wing'.

ERIC CLAPTON'S RAINBOW CONCERT (RSO) 1973

An all-star gathering of mates at the legendary London rock venue that helped re-launch Clapton's career as a "live" performer. With Pete Townshend as M.C. introducing "A song written by Jimi Hendrix..." there is a feeling of rock history being commemorated and a strong sense of occasion, even if the band's jamming on 'After Midnight' sounds a tad uncertain at times. A jumble of guitarists are prodded into action by the late Jim Capaldi of Traffic on drums and Steve Winwood sings Blind Faith's 'Presence Of The Lord' with a spiritual sense of longing and regret. The 'Concert' is an important stepping stone if not a great album.

461 OCEAN BOULEVARD (RSO) 1974

A flurry of exultant chiming chords fanfares the return of Eric to the studio as he joins forces with George Terry on guitar for 'Motherless Children'. After the uncertainties of the 'Rainbow Concert', this fresh and diverse album exudes Florida sunshine and the enthusiasm of a reinvigorated leader and a highly competent band. The big hit 'I Shot The Sheriff' is a welcome diversion into reggae, but there many other satisfying moments to savour. 'Give Me Strength' and 'Let It Grow' emphasize Clapton's new found spirituality while 'I Can't Hold Out' goes back to the roots with raunchy Elmore James-style slide guitar.



THERE'S ONE IN EVERY CROWD (RSO) 1975

Produced by Tom Dowd, this album was recorded in Kingston, Jamaica at Dowd's suggestion. His intention was that the British and American visitors should soak up the atmosphere and absorb reggae influences. However, Clapton confessed he couldn't really understand the local musicians' patois in the smoke-filled studio and the band found it tricky getting into a reggae groove. As a result there was a consensual move back to blues and gospel. However, two reggae style tracks were successfully completed. 'Swing Low, Sweet Chariot' was a UK Top 20 hit single and Clapton's 'Don't Blame Me', co-written with George Terry, was a satisfying follow-up to 'I Shot The Sheriff.' Jamie Oldaker's drumming sparks most life into what is otherwise a rather lacklustre set. Slide guitar enlivens 'We've Been Told (Jesus Is Coming Soon)' but 'Little Rachel' is a rather sleepy affair, and when intoning 'The Sky Is Crying' Clapton sounds much older than his 30 years. The album's title was originally going to be *The Best Guitarist In The World – There's One In Every Crowd*, but the first part was dropped after taking advice that certain fans might not get the irony. In any case it didn't sell as well as the record label hoped and it seemed the momentum generated by *461 Ocean Boulevard* was being lost.

E.C. WAS HERE (RSO) 1975

A live album compiled from tapes of various shows in England and America recorded during 1974–75, this LP was put out at the record company's suggestion to help boost sales of *There's One In Every Crowd* while the band was out on the road. Eric's spirited guitar introduction to opening cut 'Have You Ever Loved A Woman' was recorded at Long Beach Arena in front of a cheering crowd. Such strident enthusiasm immediately restores faith in Clapton's ability to rock, after the disappointment of the previous studio effort. Clearly he needed the adrenaline rush of a live gig and the support of an appreciative audience to switch into top gear. Both E.C. and his confident guitar partner George Terry are not afraid to cut loose with some blistering choruses.

OPPOSITE Eric at the Rainbow Theatre, London in 1973 with Steve Winwood.

ABOVE Clapton on stage at Stanford University, California in 1975.

LEFT Eric Clapton in Rotterdam in 1974 during his 461 Ocean Boulevard European Tour.

BELOW Back home and a somewhat subdued-looking Clapton poses in his garden in Surrey, England.

Among the other highlights are 'Presence Of The Lord,' 'Driftin' Blues' and Steve Winwood's leisurely 'Can't Find My Way Home', which Clapton and Steve had last played on the Blind Faith album. A slow paced 'Ramblin' On My Mind' from a December 1974 Odeon Hammersmith gig and lively 'Further On Up The Road' complete what remains a fair representation of the Clapton Band in action. However, the album did not set the charts on fire and must have been the cause of considerable debate in the boardrooms of the rock industry.

NO REASON TO CRY (RSO) 1976

A considerable improvement on the previous studio effort, the band benefits from a sharper production by Clapton and Carl Radle. Tom Dowd had been unable to take part in the sessions due to contractual problems, so the final results were mixed by Rob Fraboni after productive sessions at Shangri La Studios in Malibu and more hard work at the Village Recorder in New York. Here Eric is supported by guest stars including Bob Dylan, who sings a duet with Eric on Dylan's surreal song 'Sign Language' written in haste for the session.

Guitarist Ronnie Wood, organist Georgie Fame and members of the Band also join in the fun. Eric had been a fan of the Band since he heard their debut album *Music From Big Pink* in 1968. Eric had appeared with Rick Danko, bass player of the Band, during a jam with the Crusaders at the Roxy, in Los Angeles, alongside Elton John and Stevie Wonder. The star-studded event took place while he was in town during the summer of 1976, working on the album. The Roxy jam was attended by many of Clapton's mates including George Harrison and Mick Jagger's brother Chris.

'Beautiful Thing', composed by the Band's pianist Richard Manuel and Rick Danko, is played in three-quarter Waltz time and it must have been quite a thrill for Clapton to be finally working with musicians he so much admired. Eric shouts "Oi!" in Cockney fashion, as he kicks off the next track, 'Carnival', a celebratory piece further enhanced by Oldaker's consistently excellent drumming.

Clapton digs back into the blues for his treatment of the Otis Rush number 'Double Trouble', where his guitar playing is showcased to better effect. Marcy Levy sings at full tilt on a soulful 'Innocent Times'. She also shines on 'Hungry', where slide guitar rules, as it does on Eric's own 'Black Summer Rain.' A new member of Eric's team, percussionist Sergio Pastora Rodriguez, also makes an appearance on an album where it seems Eric was happy to be surrounded by supportive musicians ready to take the strain and give him the freedom to relax.

SLOWHAND (RSO) 1977

Hailed as one of Eric's best albums of the mid-Seventies, *Slowhand* was a much-needed commercial success, sweeping to Number 2 in the US album charts. Here Clapton eschews the use of guest musicians and concentrates on writing and performing in closer contact with his regular band. The result is a tight, well-recorded set where many of the imperfections of the past, such as jumbled mixes and overlapping layers of guitar, are eradicated. The clean, tight sound obtained at London's Olympic Studios came under the watchful eyes and ears of producer Glyn Johns. It was Eric's first album made in the UK since Cream days.

Slowhand yielded a number of hits, including 'Wonderful Tonight', 'Lay Down Sally' and J.J. Cale's controversial and somewhat menacing 'Cocaine'. Eric as lyricist and singer surpasses himself on 'Wonderful Tonight', describing the cosmetic preparations of his loved one before she heads off to dance at a party. A delicate but firm beat and subtle lyrics captivate the imagination while a timeless guitar introduction would signal instant recognition and warm applause for years to come.

'Lay Down Sally', written with Marcy Levy, is an exuberant country rocker that flows with effortless virtuosity. The hoedown riff doesn't want to stop, so they just fade it out. 'Next Time You See Her' has seemingly simplistic lyrics but a killer punchline that stays in the memory, as does the more delicate 'We're All The Way' by Don Williams. The band get cooking on 'The Core', full of supportive organ chords that swell out a neatly arranged

ensemble piece. There are lots of breaks and tricky tags peppered with saxophone licks courtesy of visiting session horn player Mel Collins. John Martyn's 'May You Never' is sung like a comforting bedtime lullaby, while Arthur Crudup's 'Mean Old Frisco' is one of the album's sturdiest blues.

Slowhand climaxes with a beautifully conceived instrumental piece 'Peaches And Diesel' that is full of pregnant pauses and graceful melodies. It serves as a complementary piece to 'Wonderful Tonight' and was included on the B-side of the hit single.

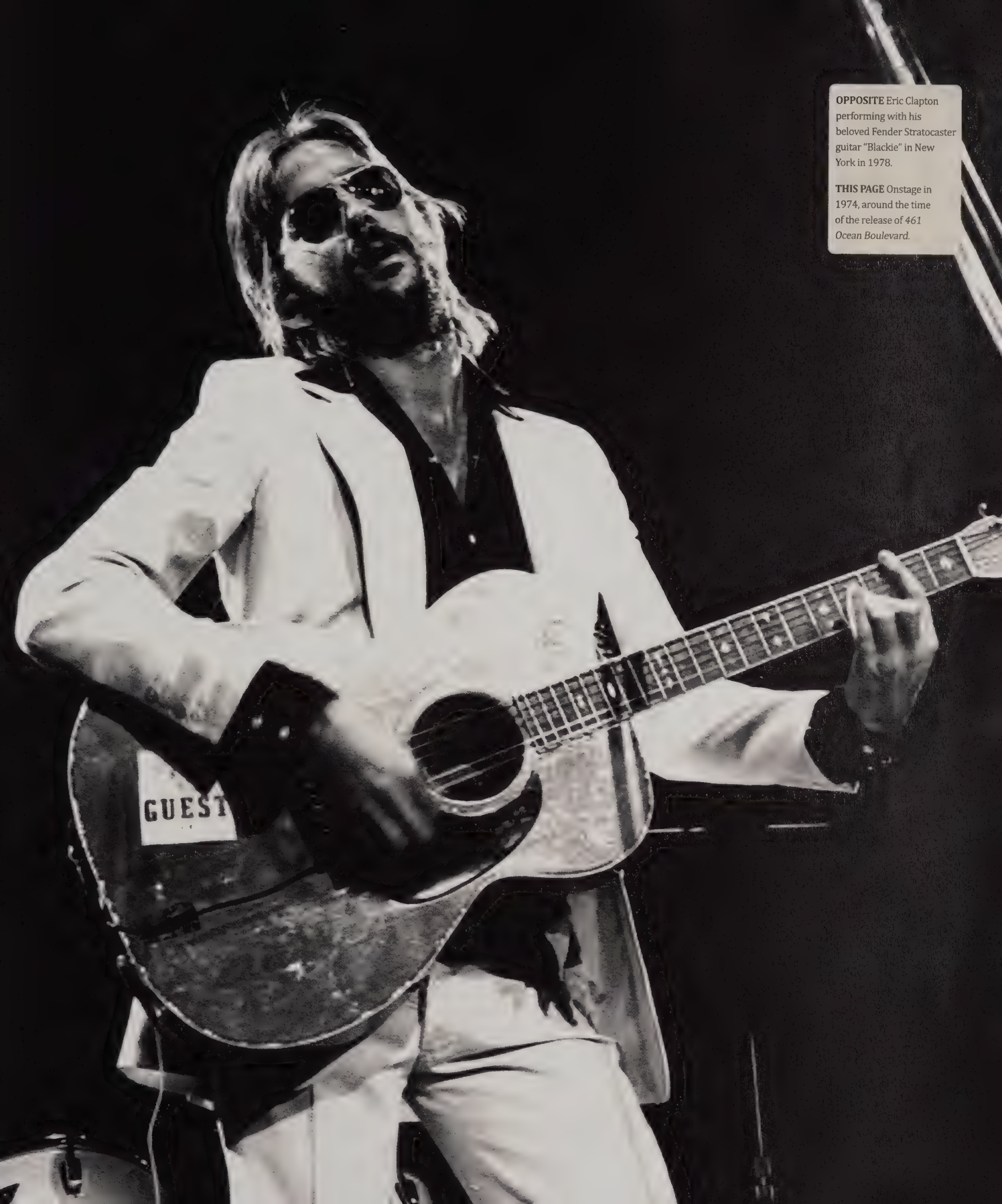
BACKLESS (RSO) 1978

Backless was Clapton's last album devised with the aid of his all-American band of the Seventies. Like *Slowhand,* it was recorded at London's Olympic Studios with producer Glyn Johns. The title *Backless* came from Clapton's memories of working with Bob Dylan when Bob starred at the Picnic at Blackbushe. The concert was held on an ex-RAF airfield in Hampshire on July 15, 1978 and was attended by thousands of fans. It seemed that Bob had a habit of abruptly facing his band when he felt there were problems onstage. If he turned his back on the musicians, they knew everything was cool.

The mood on *Backless* is decidedly mellow from the outset with the band plodding in routine fashion on Dylan's 'Walk Out In The Rain', full of slide guitar and country licks. 'Watch Out For Lucy' gets a "one, two, three, four" count in from E.C. and it's the sort of number that would go down well at a hoedown or pub rock venue. This was the era when Clapton later confessed he was into writing "cheerful ditties". More sombre is 'I'll Make Love To You Anytime' by one of Eric's favourite artists J.J. Cale.

'Roll It' casts the spotlight briefly on Marcy Levy, who gets to holler and whoop in Tina Turner fashion over a rolling and tumbling slide guitar riff that doesn't go anywhere. 'Tell Me That You Love Me' is a stirring Clapton original. 'If I Don't Be There By Morning' is a previously unreleased Bob Dylan song with the lyrics somewhat buried in the keyboard mix. 'Early In The Morning' is a slow, rather pedestrian blues number and 'Promises' is a sing-along ditty matched by Eric's own composition, 'Golden Ring', which is complete with humming intro. It's all a long way from 'Toad' and 'White Room' – just what Eric needed.

The album concludes with a routine performance of 'Tulsa Time', a song by Danny Flowers, who played guitar for country singer Don Williams. Dick Sims goes to town on the piano, but after these sessions George Terry left the band, soon to be followed by Marcy Levy. It was time for Eric to make a big change. He would start a refresher course with an all-British line-up for his next decade of touring and recording.



OPPOSITE Eric Clapton performing with his beloved Fender Stratocaster guitar "Blackie" in New York in 1978.

THIS PAGE Onstage in 1974, around the time of the release of *461 Ocean Boulevard*.

MONEY, CIGARETTES & LIVE AID

INTO THE EIGHTIES

The Japanese live album, *Just One Night,* was the opening salvo by the revitalized Eric Clapton Band as they saluted the new decade. Among Eric's newest recruits was keyboard player and vocalist Gary Brooker, the leader of Procol Harum, who joined for a 13-date UK tour in May 1980. The live album was well received and got to Number 3 in the UK chart and Number 2 in the US, where it stayed for six weeks in June. The single 'Tulsa Time' was also a medium hit, reaching Number 30 in the US in August.

It seemed as if Eric was ready to face the world with renewed confidence and energy. But there were tragedies and disappointments to come, which would frequently knock him back, including the death in May 1980 of old friend Carl Radle, the bass player and arranger who had helped him throughout the Seventies.

A serious health problem also caught up with Clapton early in 1981 and precipitated a fresh crisis in his life. Eric was only eight days into a major US tour when he collapsed at the Dano County Expo Center in Madison, Wisconsin in March. He was in agony despite taking a surfeit of painkiller tablets, without knowing the cause of the problem. He was flown by his manager to the United Hospital in Minneapolis–St. Paul, Minnesota. An X-ray revealed five bleeding ulcers, including one so large it was about to burst. Doctors warned that Eric's condition was dangerous and he needed urgent treatment. The ulcers were blamed on years of excessive drinking and too much rich food. He had to undergo a four-week stay in the hospital while the ulcers were reduced in size.

Having spent his 36th birthday in a hospital bed, Eric was then involved in a car crash in Seattle, just four days after being discharged. As a result the outstanding US tour and other scheduled trips had to be cancelled. He flew back to Minneapolis in April and then home to London to rest, having been diagnosed with pleurisy.

In February 1981 *Another Ticket* had been released, produced by Tom Dowd and recorded at Compass Point Studios in Nassau, Bahamas. The line-up had Gary Brooker joining forces with Chris Stainton, Albert Lee, Dave Markee and Henry Spinetti. The album's success underscored Clapton's enduring popularity, particularly in the States, where it topped the charts for two weeks. One of the tracks, 'I Can't Stand It', was also a US Top 10 hit.

In May 1981 Clapton was invited to contribute to Phil Collins' debut album *Face Value* (Virgin), that became a huge hit and launched Collins' mega successful solo career. It would also be the start of a productive friendship between the two self-made superstars.

Towards the end of the year Clapton decided to leave Robert Stigwood's RSO record label and sign a new deal with WEA, who would distribute Eric's own Duck Records. Although he had been off the road for much of the year recuperating, he did team up with fellow ex-Yardbird Jeff Beck to perform at a concert for Amnesty International called "The Secret Policeman's Other Ball" in London in September 1981.

By January 1982 Eric realized he needed to take drastic action to combat the problem that was endangering his life. Despite the experience of hospitalization for ulcers in 1981 he had begun drinking heavily again, to the distress of family and friends. Manager Roger Forrester convinced Clapton he needed to face up to his alcoholism and he was flown to Minneapolis–St. Paul, where he entered the Hazelden Foundation Center for four weeks' treatment while undergoing a strict regime, bringing him greater self-discipline.

He attended Alcoholics Anonymous sessions that also proved a great help. Clapton, now sharp-witted and focused, was eager to return to work. Although there was a relapse back into drinking towards the end of the decade, thereafter he was free of the problem and would devote much of his wealth and energy to saving others from addiction to drink and drugs.

Eric hadn't released an album during 1982 apart from hits compilation *Time Pieces Vol. 1* (RSO). At the end of the year he broke up his regular band and in 1983 teamed up with American bassist Donald "Duck" Dunn and drummer Roger Hawkins. They would appear on the album *Money And Cigarettes* (Duck), another Tom Dowd production recorded at Compass Point and issued in February 1983. Albert Lee was retained from the previous band while Ry Cooder made a guest appearance on slide guitar.

The opening track, 'Everybody Oughta Make A Change', was a song by bluesman Sleepy John Estes. The advisory tone of the lyrics clearly held a strong meaning for Clapton. On the album cover E.C. is seen posing bearded, wearing a smart suit and tie, languidly holding a cigarette. He stands near an ironing board complete with guitar, which surreally folds over the stand. Here was the new Clapton, mature, so much smarter in appearance than the shambolic figure in dungarees who had stumbled through the Seventies. *Money And Cigarettes* was deservedly a Top 20 hit in both the US and UK.

After Clapton made his recovery from hospitalization and benefited from ongoing treatment, it was time to make his presence felt onstage once more and in the company of his peers. It was an historic moment when Eric lined up onstage at the Royal Albert Hall, London on September 20, 1983, together with fellow guitar heroes Jeff Beck and Jimmy

OPPOSITE Back at the Ahoy, Rotterdam in 1983. **LEFT** With Phil Collins in 1984, who would help E.C. to develop a new sound.

ABOVE LEFT Cigarette at the ready as Clapton communes with "Blackie" in 1983 at the Arms Concert.

ABOVE Clapton and Pattie Boyd on a night out at Langan's Brasserie in 1981. They would be together for six years.

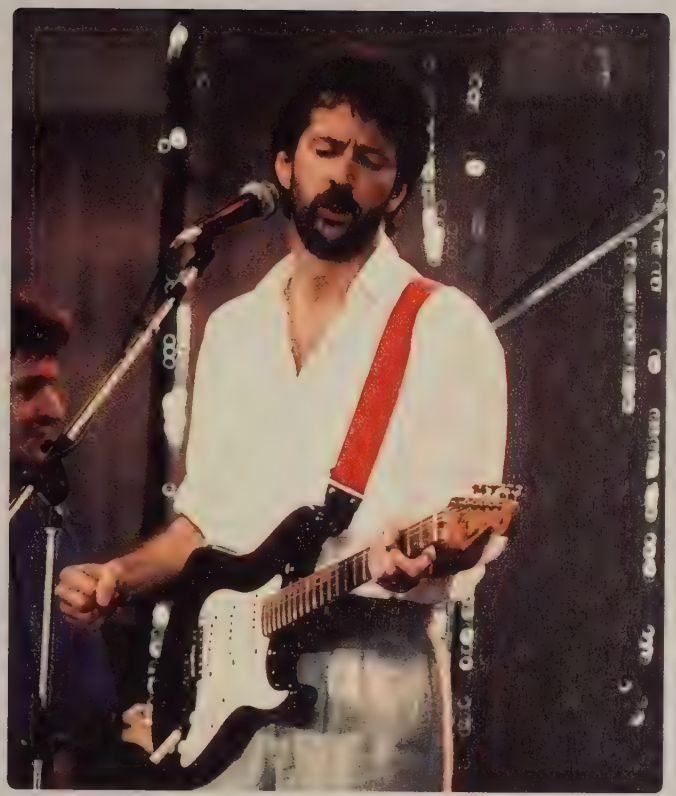
BELOW Clapton on stage with Bill Wyman and Jeff Beck at the Ronnie Lane MS benefit concert in 1983.

Page, the latter making one of his first appearances since the break-up of Led Zeppelin. All three former Yardbirds guitarists were appearing together onstage for the first and only time as they played 'Tulsa Time' and 'Layla', complete with guitar solos, during an historic and emotional occasion. They were appearing at a star packed three hour charity concert to raise funds for ARMS (Action For Research Into Multiple Sclerosis) on behalf of campaigner Ronnie Lane, the former Small Faces/Faces bass player and singer who was himself suffering from MS. Eric played his own set which included, most notably, 'Wonderful Tonight.' At the end of the show all the musicians including Steve Winwood, Bill Wyman, Andy Fairweather Low, Ray Cooper, John Paul Jones, Kenny Jones, Charlie Watts and Ronnie Lane, performed in a grand finale watched by Prince Charles and Lady Diana in the Royal Box.

"AT LIVE AID I WAS A HUNDRED TIMES MORE PSYCHED UP THAN FOR A REGULAR GIG. I COULDN'T TALK TO ANYBODY AND WAS COMPLETELY TONGUE-TIED." ERIC CLAPTON

Eric later went on a full scale ARMS tour of the States along with Beck, Page, Joe Cocker and Paul Rodgers that finished with a show at Madison Square Garden, New York on December 8, 1983.

In July the following year Eric collaborated with another old friend when he joined Bob Dylan onstage at Wembley Arena. He also performed live with Roger Waters, bass player and singer with Pink Floyd, having played on Roger's solo album *The Pros And Cons Of Hitch Hiking*. He accepted the offer to work with Roger mainly because he was feeling at a low ebb after *Money And Cigarettes*, an album he now confessed was not especially



ABOVE OPPOSITE A smiling Eric Clapton poses on stage at the Hordern Pavilion, Sydney, Australia, in 1984.

OPPOSITE Trying to look inconspicuous, Clapton among the audience at Bruce Springsteen's concert at Slane Castle, Dublin in 1985.

FAR TOP Clapton played and sang on ex-Pink Floyd Roger Waters' *The Pros and Cons of Hitch Hiking* album. He also played on the 1984 tour.

TOP Now established as rock and roll royalty, Clapton was the special guest star at Bob Dylan's London gig in 1984.

ABOVE RIGHT Clapton was one of the star performers at the historic Live Aid Concert. He played at JFK Stadium concert in Philadelphia.

RIGHT March 1985 saw Clapton release *Behind the Sun,* the guitarist's first collaborative project with Phil Collins. The album was hailed by critics as Clapton's finest for several years.

to his liking. He was particularly pleased with his own blues playing on the Waters track 'Sexual Revolution'. They performed at Earls Court, London in June 1984 and Eric would work with Waters on several more projects, including a concert for the Tsunami Relief Fund in 2005.

By 1985 Clapton was ready to release a new album, *Behind The Sun,* produced by Phil Collins, which yielded two hit singles, 'Forever Man' and 'She's Waiting'. The sessions for the album were held at Sir George Martin's Air Studios on Montserrat. At first Warner Brothers rejected the album, as they felt it wasn't "rocky" enough. An extra three tracks featuring songs by Jerry Williams were recorded with producer Ted Templeman in Los Angeles, and the album was finally released in March. During the LA sessions Eric met bassist Nathan East and keyboard player Greg Phillinganes and later recruited them for his own band.

The album was given encouraging reviews by critics, who hailed Clapton's finest guitar playing on record for several years. It got to Number 8 in the UK album charts in March 1985 and Number 34 in the US. But the single 'Forever Man' was only a minor UK hit. Phil would also produce Eric's next album August in 1986.

As Sleepy John Estes had said, "everybody oughta make a change" and in 1985 Pattie Boyd left Eric's home and he found himself alone, without a partner after six years of marriage. During a world tour, he began an affair with actress and photographer Lori Del Santo after meeting her at a party in Italy. She gave birth to their son Conor in August 1986. Pattie and Eric were divorced in 1987.

On July 13, 1985 Bob Geldof organized the two historic Live Aid concerts, held simultaneously in Philadelphia and at Wembley Stadium, London. Eric performed at the JFK Stadium in Philadelphia with Jamie Oldaker on drums. Clapton was later joined by Phil Collins, who managed the feat of appearing at both Live Aid shows by jetting across the Atlantic on Concorde. Clapton opened up with 'White Room' and 'She's Waiting' before Collins sat in on 'Layla'. It was later estimated that Live Aid was watched by 100,000 at the Stadium and by an estimated 1.9 billion TV viewers in 150 countries around the world. Eric Clapton was one of many rock artists whose careers were boosted by their appearance on these unique shows. And the Eighties weren't over yet.

NEW DIRECTIONS

GUEST APPEARANCES AND FILM SCORES

Eric Clapton overcame any remaining personal problems simply by working as hard as possible, whenever possible. His new passion for the healthy outdoor sport of angling provided a real alternative to his usual environment of dressing rooms, studios and bars. Sitting by riverbanks brought peaceful contentment, as well as the satisfaction of catching fish.

By the mid-Eighties Clapton had found two inspirational musicians who could push his performing to new levels; bass player Nathan East and keyboard virtuoso Greg Phillinganes. Eric was also happy to accept the help of other people he admired, notably Phil Collins, his ever-cheerful neighbour in Surrey. As the drummer and singer with Genesis, Collins had always been a workaholic even before *Face Value* launched him into pop hero status. An enthusiastic admirer of Clapton's work, particularly with Cream, Phil was only too willing to impart his insights about the style of music that seasoned rockers now needed to adopt to gain hit records.

In 1986 Clapton released *August* (Duck), his 10th studio album and the second produced by Collins, who also played drums and provided backing vocals. The title bore particular significance. August was the month that Clapton's son Conor was born. The music was energized by the guest appearance of Tina Turner on the rousing 'Tearing Us Apart', one of Clapton's seminal guitar riff rockers.

In November, *August* shot to Number 3 in the UK although it got only as far as Number 37 in the US Billboard chart. One of the tracks, 'Behind The Mask', was a Top 20 UK hit in February 1987.

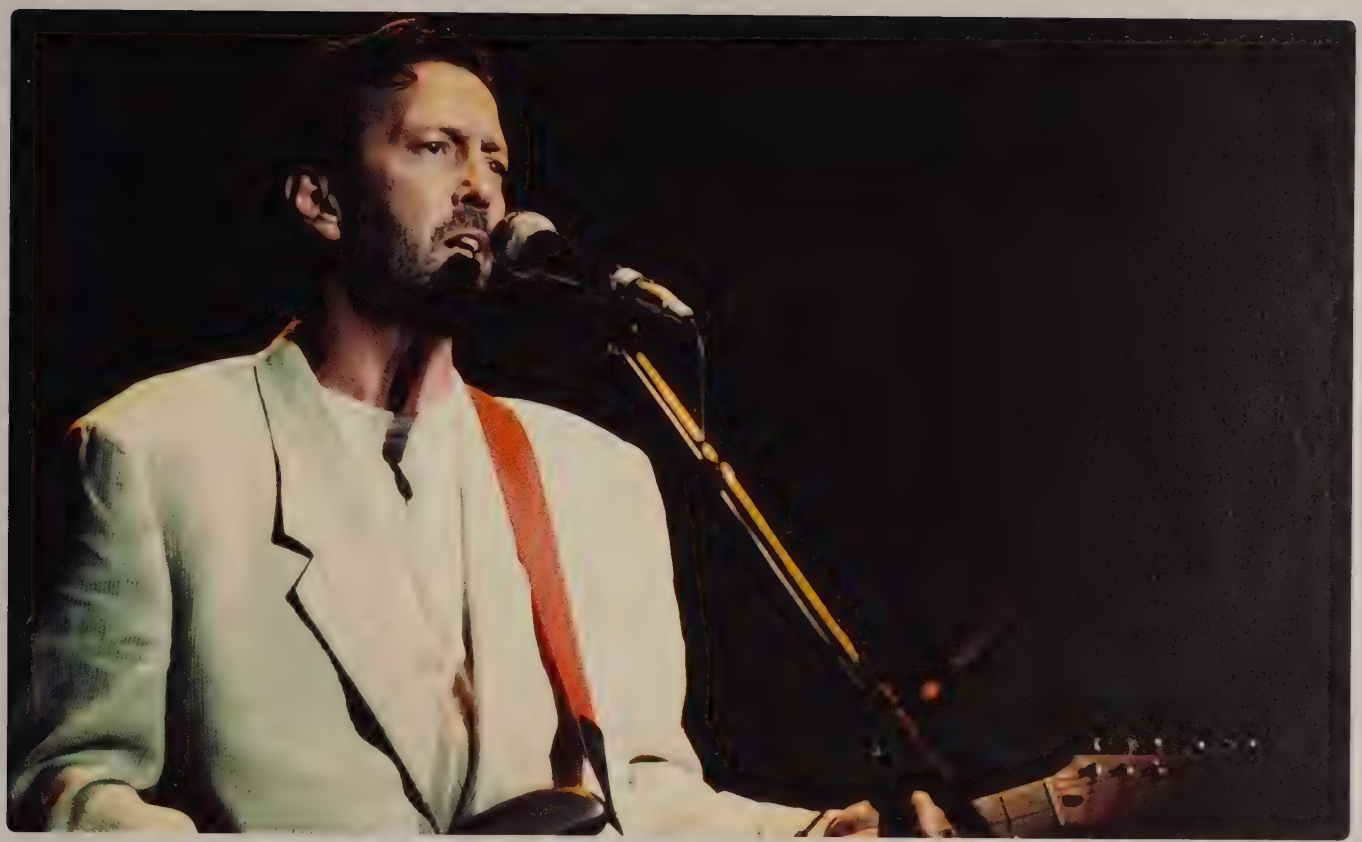
In a welcome diversion, Eric won a BAFTA Award (Best Original Television Music Score) in January 1986 for his collaboration with Hollywood film music composer Michael Kamen. Clapton and Kamen wrote a score for the 1985 BBC TV drama series *Edge Of Darkness* starring Bob Peck. Clapton's haunting guitar theme perfectly suited the mood of the thriller about a nuclear conspiracy. The main theme was performed live by Eric and Michael with the National Philharmonic Orchestra at the Royal Albert Hall in 1990. Eric would team up with Kamen again to write a score for the Mel Gibson movie *Lethal Weapon 2*.

The remainder of 1986 was mostly taken up with guest appearances on charity shows such as the fourth annual Prince's Trust show at Wembley Arena. On June 20, Eric performed alongside Phil Collins, Elton John, Paul McCartney, George Michael, Rod Stewart and Tina Turner. On October 16 he played at the Fox Theater in St. Louis, Missouri in a concert to honour Chuck Berry's 60th birthday, an event hosted by Keith Richards.

1987 saw the beginning of a remarkable series of Clapton concerts held at London's Royal Albert Hall. The venerable old Victorian building was a favourite venue for Eric, who described performing there as being "Like playing in my front room". On January 6 Clapton delivered the first of six sold-out shows. The following year he repeated the exercise with nine shows in January 1988, which included Dire Straits' Mark Knopfler on rhythm guitar. By 1989 the January residency had expanded to 12 shows with Eric performing with a four-piece group and an eight-piece band.

Back in 1987 Clapton performed at another Prince's Trust charity concert at Wembley Arena on June 5 with Ringo Starr, Dave Edmunds, Jeff Lynn and George Harrison. He also played with Tina Turner at Wembley Arena two weeks later.

An important compilation album in April 1988, *Crossroads* (Polydor), produced by Bill Levenson, celebrated Eric's by now lengthy career. It comprised 73 tracks on four CDs and six LPs. Among them were six previously unreleased items by Derek and the Dominos. During 1988 Eric was never far from a stage. He played on another



OPPOSITE LEFT Jamming with Ronnie Wood and Keith Richards at Chuck Berry's 60th Birthday concert. **OPPOSITE RIGHT** Eric with his son Conor. **LEFT** The decade saw E.C. perform in a number of star-studded concerts, including the 1987 Princes Trust Concert with George Harrison and Jeff Lynne. **ABOVE** A smartly attired Grammy award winning Eric Clapton in 1988. **BELOW** Red Fender Strat at the ready, Clapton in iconic pose in 1987.

Prince's Trust Rock Gala concert at the Royal Albert Hall alongside the Bee Gees, Leonard Cohen, Peter Gabriel, Elton John and Mark Knopfler. Then it was back to Wembley Stadium to play with Dire Straits at the Nelson Mandela 70th Birthday Party concert.

In November 1989 Clapton released a new studio album, *Journeyman* (Duck), with Robert Cray and George Harrison contributing to the songwriting. The album got to Number 3 in the UK and Number 16 in the US.

Still a travelling man, Clapton completed a world tour in August 1989 with a free concert for 100,000 fans in Mozambique, Africa. In October he also jammed with the Rolling Stones on 'Little Red Rooster' at the Shea Stadium in New York. With such a busy life, there wasn't much time to go fishin'.

CLAPTON'S ALBUMS

THE EIGHTIES

Eric made many changes during the Eighties, just as he'd always done. New bands were formed, the finest musicians selected and partnerships conceived, in the quest to create the ultimate Clapton album. Reviewers often claimed he was hiding his light under the bushel of producers, leading to a choice of material that was not always deemed appropriate. But there were always gems to be found in the Clapton treasure chest and by the end of the decade *Journeyman* would fulfil many of his ambitions and satisfy the sharpest critics and keenest fans.

JUST ONE NIGHT (RSO) 1980

Eric's all-British band were unveiled on a live double album recorded at the Budokan, Tokyo in December 1979 with producer Jon Astley. It comprises a complete concert of ballads and rockers delivered with easy assurance. As the band sets out to win over the audience, Chris Stainton sparks off 'Tulsa Time' with rock'n'roll piano backed by hard working rhythm men Dave Markee (bass) and Henry Spinetti (drums).

Among the brightest performances is a bouncy 'Lay Down Sally', a country groove suited to Eric's guitar partner, country picking Albert Lee. The sanctified 'Early In The Morning' harks back to the days of R&B. When Clapton tells us "one drink of wine" affects his resistance to pretty young girls, he is clearly speaking from experience. A loud cheer from the Japanese fans greets the intro to 'Wonderful Tonight' that Eric sings with tremulous sincerity.

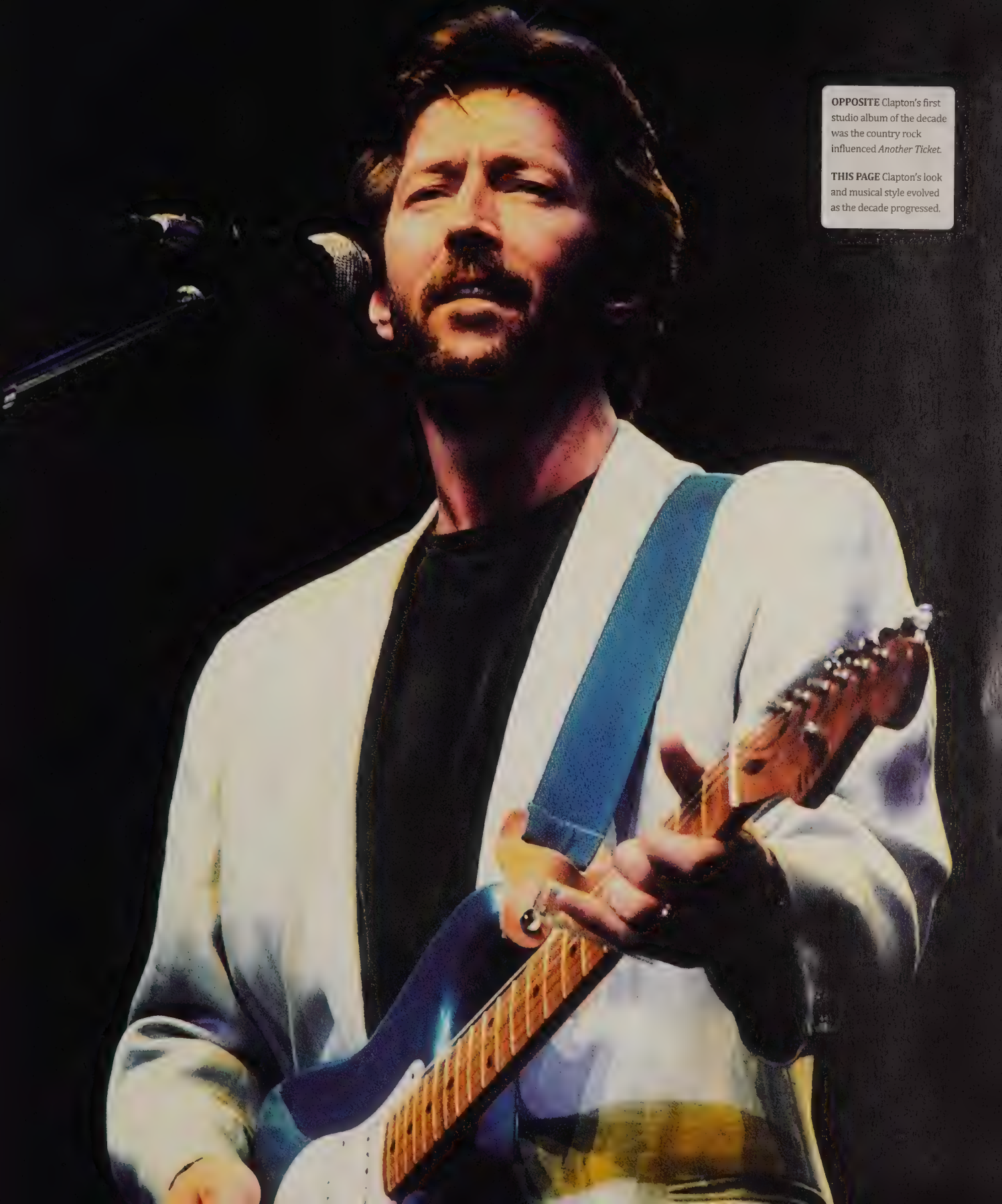
Bob Dylan's 'If I Don't Be There By Morning' lifts the mood, and as the concert progresses 'All Our Past Times, 'Cocaine' and 'Further On Up The Road' are crowd-pleasing highlights. It's all performed with smooth professionalism, if it lacks a certain sparkle.

ANOTHER TICKET (RSO) 1981

A country rock vibe pervades the first studio album with the UK band, produced by Tom Dowd, which now welcomed Procol Harum's keyboard player and vocalist Gary Brooker. He collaborates with Eric on the jerky 'Catch Me If You Can', but Clapton seems more at home on the laid-back gospel number 'Something Special'. The band locks together during relaxed sessions held at Compass Point studios in Nassau. Eric sings with easy charm on 'Black Rose' and the Sleepy John Estes' blues song 'Floating Bridge'. Among the more upbeat numbers, 'I Can't Stand It' was a US Number 10 hit single. Clapton originals include 'Hold Me Lord' and the exciting 'Rita Mae', driven by a solid beat and blessed with a killer guitar riff. When it came to making a new studio album Clapton felt that, despite the band's best efforts, they had become jaded and weren't giving him enough drive.

MONEY AND CIGARETTES (DUCK RECORDS) 1983

Eric chose the title *Money And Cigarettes* because that's all he thought was left to him, after his successful battle against addiction meant giving up drugs and alcohol. Yet his newfound sobriety paid off with a much improved production and sharper performances.



OPPOSITE Clapton's first studio album of the decade was the country rock influenced *Another Ticket*.

THIS PAGE Clapton's look and musical style evolved as the decade progressed.

LEFT Ready for a Strat attack. Clapton performs in concert in Rotterdam, 1983.

BELOW (left to right) Riding with the kings. Albert King, B.B. King, E.C. and Stevie Ray Vaughan in 1987.

OPPOSITE LEFT Clapton's 1986 album release *August* has a sound redolent of the decade's glamour. He also cultivated a new look, wearing sharp designer suits.

OPPOSITE RIGHT Eric and Tina Turner tear into 'Tearing Us Apart'. This stunning duet featured on the *August* album.

'Everybody Oughta Make A Change' kicks off the album with a warmly seductive theme courtesy of composer Sleepy John Estes, whose work Clapton much admired. The song title is very significant. There had indeed been drastic changes during the making of this first release for Eric's Duck label. Taking producer Tom Dowd's advice, Clapton relinquished the all-British group and brought in legendary American musicians, bass player Donald "Duck" Dunn and drummer Roger Hawkins. Eric: "The first day they came in we set up and played 'Crosscut Saw' all day. I found I was really getting stretched."

Clapton sings with greater clarity and there is a buzz in the studio on numbers like 'The Shape You're In' and the rocking 'Slow Down Linda'. A US Top 20 hit 'I've Got A Rock'n'Roll Heart' has a catchy vocal hook and 'Crosscut Saw' features inspired guitar soloing over a romping Bayou beat. Eric's 'Man Overboard' and Johnny Otis' 'Crazy Country Hop' are entertaining highlights, while slide guitarist Ry Cooder swaps phrases with Eric on 'The Shape You're In' and 'Pretty Girl'.

BEHIND THE SUN (DUCK RECORDS) 1985

Eric admired Phil Collins' drumming and was greatly impressed by Phil's work producing singer John Martyn. This led to a productive partnership. Says Eric: "I thought I would like to have him produce my record. We were going more for atmosphere than for a sound, something intangible. As a working relationship it was very creative. I knew it would be easy as we get on very well in the studio. It's a great relationship."

Eric and Phil wanted an album that was a proper portrayal of all the styles Clapton felt affinity with, from reggae to acoustic blues. He was also keen to experiment with a new Roland guitar synthesizer. As far as Collins and Clapton were concerned, *Behind The Sun* was a successful concept album. But on hearing the completed tapes, Warner Brothers asked for more numbers with hit potential, much to Clapton's dismay and chagrin. Texas songwriter Jerry Lynn Williams was asked to send some material that Eric subsequently recorded in Los Angeles with the "A team" of session men, Jeff Porcaro, Steve Lukather, Michael Omartian and Greg Phillinganes.

They delivered the goods, but many of the original tracks were still of a high

standard. 'She's Waiting', a Clapton original inspired by his feelings for Pattie Boyd, was particularly attractive. 'See What Love Can Do' is an optimistic piece in which Clapton contemplates that "The world would be so happy if we could just get along... a smile on every face." 'Same Old Blues' is sung with gruff anger, matched by an electrifying guitar solo.

Eddie Floyd's Stax classic 'Knock On Wood' covered by everyone from Otis Redding to Amii Stewart, is given a sturdy Clapton treatment and 'Something's Happening', produced by Ted Templeman, has Eric exclaiming that "life is a constant struggle". The most commercial track, 'Forever Man' by Jerry Lynn Williams, has a romping guitar solo and was deservedly a Top 30 US hit, achieving the result that Warner Brothers had demanded.

ENCLOSURES

ITEM 16

Clapton regularly toured Europe in the 1970s. This ticket is for an early gig in Germany.

ITEM 17

A poster showing Eric Clapton performing on stage at Ahoy, Rotterdam, in 1974 during his 461 Ocean Boulevard European Tour.

ITEM 18

A Clapton press kit from 1976, produced to promote his upcoming album *No Reason To Cry* and American tour.

ITEM 19

A poster to promote Clapton's 1977 European tour. Ronnie Lane's cutely named Slim Chance provide the support.

ITEM 20

"Eric Clapton and His Friends" US tour poster from 1978. He released the album *Backless* in the same year.

The rest of the album is not quite so appealing, but title track 'Behind The Sun' is a touching, gentle duet between Eric on guitar and vocals and Phil on synthesizer, recorded at Collins' home using an eight track recorder.

Despite problems with some of the material, *Behind The Sun* is a glossy piece of work needed to reassert Clapton's position in the highly competitive Eighties music scene.

AUGUST (DUCK RECORDS) 1986

Clapton's 10th studio effort, produced by Phil Collins and Tom Dowd, is one of the guitarist's biggest-selling albums. A mixture of strong performances and some weaker songs, *August* is redolent of Armani suits and Wall Street glamour. A tight knit band comprises Greg Phillinganes, Nathan East and Phil Collins. Premier number 'It's In The Way That You Use It' was included in the soundtrack to the 1986 movie *The Color Of Money*, starring Tom Cruise and Paul Newman.

However, the most exciting song is 'Tearing Us Apart', a Clapton/Phillinganes composition, performed with gusto by Eric and guest vocalist Tina Turner. Robert Cray's 'Bad Influence' has an infectious shuffle rhythm and 'Walk Away', a pleasant ballad, has powerful drumming from Collins. After dipping into some routine pop songs, 'Miss You' proves an excellent LA style rocker and 'Holy Mother' is a heartfelt ballad dedicated to Richard Manuel of the Band, who died in tragic circumstances in 1986. 'Behind The Mask', the album's only UK hit single, is a Yellow Magic Orchestra piece that Phillinganes had previously recorded with Quincy Jones and Michael Jackson.

JOURNEYMAN (DUCK RECORDS) 1989

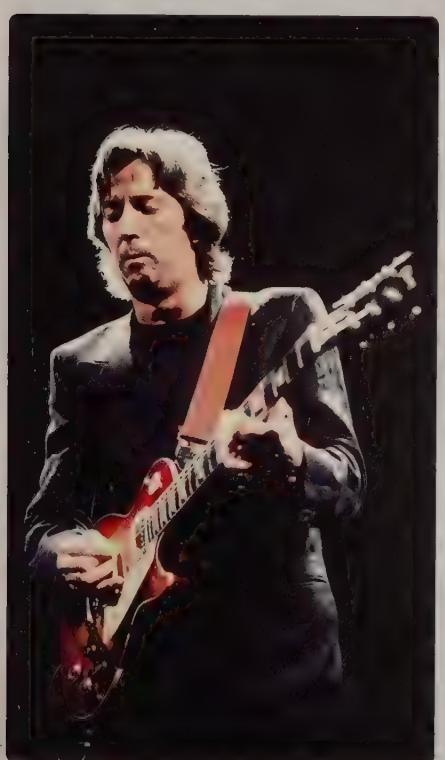
Eric's favourite album, *Journeyman* had many top musicians, singers and writers helping out with an ambitious project. They included Phil Collins (drums), George Harrison and Robert Cray (guitars), Jerry Lynn Williams (guitar), David "Fathead" Newman (saxophone), Gary Burton (vibraphone) and Greg Phillinganes (keyboards).

"WHENEVER I MAKE A RECORD [LIKE *AUGUST*] MY LIFE SEEMS TO CHANGE YET AGAIN. THAT DEPENDS AS MUCH ON THE INFLUENCE OF THE PEOPLE INVOLVED AS IT DOES UPON THE MUSIC." ERIC CLAPTON

An impressive array of backing vocalists added to the quality of the production, notably Linda Womack, Daryl Hall, Chaka Khan and Tessa Niles.

Between them and the assistance of arranger Arif Mardin, they produced an outstanding set of mature, timeless performances with Eric singing at his best, particularly on the beautiful 'Old Love'. Eric especially wanted to work again with songwriter and guitarist Jerry Lynn Williams, who had written his previous hit 'Forever Man'. But he made sure he wasn't going to be "submerged" by Williams' "wild personality" and needed to be in charge. "I was very firm in making sure this record was for me", said Eric later. He was tired of giving way to people when in the studio, hoping to keep everyone happy. Williams certainly made his presence felt by contributing the purposeful 'Running On Faith'. (Sadly, Williams died from cancer aged 57 in November 2005).

Among the remaining tracks, 'Pretending' (another Williams track) marks a return to heavy rock with howling guitar and vicious drums, while 'Anything For Your Love' is a spacious and uncluttered arrangement.The storming 'Bad Love' won Best Male Rock Vocal Performance in the 1990 Grammy Awards. 'Hard Times' is a jazzy tribute to Ray Charles and 'Hound Dog' provides much needed rock 'n' roll fun. George Harrison contributed 'Run So Far', while 'Old Love' with Robert Cray is a relaxed, tasteful blues. Bo Diddley's 'Before You Accuse Me' provides a rocking climax to Eric's first double platinum album.



JOYS AND SORROWS

THE NINETIES

Just as Clapton began to enjoy all the joys and benefits improved health and hard work had brought in its wake, he seemed fated to endure further tragedies and misfortune. These might have stopped him in his tracks. Yet Eric was fortified by a determination to carry on working and buoyed by the conviction he should devote himself to helping others. Whatever happened, touring, recording and playing the guitar would help make sense of a sometimes troubled life.

1990 began with the news that *Journeyman* was a Top 20 hit album. It reached Number 2 in the UK chart in February, just behind Phil Collins' album *But Seriously.* And 'Bad Love', the song co-written with Mick Jones of Foreigner, got to Number 25 in the UK.

On January 18 Clapton began another season at London's Royal Albert Hall, the venue where he felt most at home. This time he played a marathon 18 shows, dividing performances between a 13-piece big band, a blues combo with guests Robert Cray and Buddy Guy and the 60-piece National Orchestra. Fans packed the hall as the residency continued for a month.

Awards continued to flow, and in March Clapton won "Best Guitarist" in *Rolling Stone*'s annual readers' poll. Later that year in June he was named "Living Legend of the Year" at the International Rock Awards in New York. (Eric would now write "Legend" in the box marked "Occupation" when filling in immigration forms).

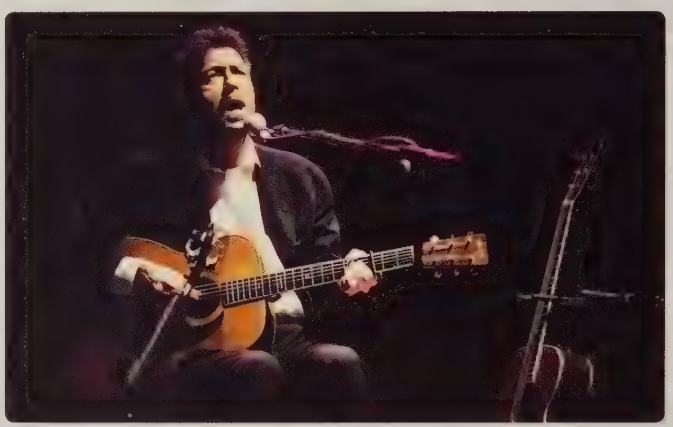
On March 28 he set off on the first leg of a massive 56-date US tour, beginning in Atlanta,

"WHEN CONOR DIED I WENT INTO SHOCK. IT FELT LIKE I SHUT DOWN." ERIC CLAPTON

Georgia with a band comprising Phil Palmer (guitar), Alan Clark and Greg Phillinganes (keyboards), Nathan East (bass), Steve Ferrone (drums), Ray Cooper (percussion) and Tessa Niles and Katie Kissoon (backing vocals).

Back in England on June 30 he appeared at a Silver Clef charity concert organized by Nordoff Robbins at Knebworth Park. Among Eric's fellow bill toppers were Phil Collins, Genesis, Pink Floyd, Robert Plant, Cliff Richard, Paul McCartney, Status Quo, Elton John and Mark Knopfler.

On July 23 Clapton flew back to the States for the second leg of his US tour, starting at the Arena, Miami. On August 27 tragedy stuck. After a concert at the Alpine Valley Music Theater in East Troy, Wisconsin featuring Clapton with Robert Cray and Stevie Ray Vaughan, a Bell 206 helicopter carrying some of the entourage crashed in fog, having hit an artificial ski slope. Among those who died on board were Stevie Ray Vaughan, the pilot, Clapton's tour manager Colin Smythe, bodyguard Nigel Browne and agent Bobby Brooks. Stevie had jumped into the chopper, one of four carrying the touring party, anxious to get to Chicago airport. Eric had travelled safely in one of the other flights. When told the news in a morning phone call, Eric was devastated. Stevie had been jamming with Clapton and Cray just the night before on 'Sweet Home Chicago'.



In 1991 Clapton plunged back into more work, with a 24-date season at the Royal Albert Hall, commencing on February 5 and continuing until March 9. This time the shows were divided into five segments with four- and nine-piece groups, a blues band with Albert Collins, Robert Cray and Buddy Guy and an orchestra conducted by Michael Kamen.

Just 11 days after the final gig, Eric was shattered by the tragic death of his four-year-old son Conor. It resulted from an accident on March 20 at the Manhattan apartment rented by the child's mother Lori Del Santo. Conor had run towards an open window left open by a cleaner and tumbled 700 feet from the 53rd floor. Eric had arrived from London the day before and was staying at a nearby hotel. He had already taken Conor to a circus at Nassau Coliseum before returning him to his mother's condominium.

On hearing the news of Conor's death, Eric was taken to hospital suffering from shock. Both Eric and Lori were severely traumatized. In the aftermath Clapton was deluged with messages of sympathy and was moved to write 'Tears In Heaven' about his loss with the help of songwriter Will Jennings. Released as a single in March 1992, it was a massive hit around the world.

Clapton enjoyed great success with his 1992 album *Unplugged* that yielded his acoustic hit reggae version of 'Layla'. More albums rounded out the decade including *From The Cradle* (1994) and *Pilgrim* (1998) whose 'My Father's Eyes' was another hit single.

In 1997 Eric set up the Crossroads Foundation in Antigua, helping those suffering from drink and drug problems. It was a gesture that expressed his tireless generosity and concern for others.

OPPOSITE Clapton reinvented himself once again with his critically acclaimed *Unplugged* album. Here, he performs with his Martin acoustic at the Albert Hall in 1993.

ABOVE Clapton and his acoustic guitar take a field trip, for this iconic photograph taken in 1993.

ABOVE RIGHT The shocking death of his son Conor left Clapton severely traumatized. He would later be moved to write 'Tears in Heaven'.

RIGHT Clapton holding his five Grammy awards. Among those awarded were best album, *Unplugged*, and best song, 'Tears in Heaven'.

FAR RIGHT A close-up portrait of Clapton performing onstage in the Netherlands in 1991.

CLAPTON'S ALBUMS

THE NINETIES

Eric Clapton's achievements during his fourth decade as a recording artist were remarkable to the point of becoming incredible. His unique seasons at the Royal Albert Hall were celebrated on a superb double album, he gained six Grammy Awards for the ground-breaking *Unplugged*, returned to the blues with a passion on *From The Cradle* and *Pilgrim* yielded yet another classic song 'My Father's Eyes'.

24 NIGHTS (REPRISE) 1991

Boasting the finest musicians and a library of songs spanning years of hit-making, Eric was in the happy position of being able to satisfy both audiences and his own musical needs during his annual seasons at the Royal Albert Hall. For posterity, Clapton's concerts at the venue in 1990 and 1991 were expertly recorded live on a double CD. It captures the star on fire with a four-piece group, a blues band, a nine-piece band and the National Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Michael Kamen.

The first tracks celebrate Eric's days with Cream and yells of encouragement greet Eric as his guitar chimes out the opening chords of 'Badge'. "Good evening, welcome to the annual dust-up," responds the guitarist cheerily, leading into a beautiful 'Running On Faith', sung with understated passion and topped by a dazzling solo. Steve Ferrone nails the drum rhythms of 'White Room' as Eric revives his psychedelic wah-wah pedal. An exuberant 'Sunshine Of Your Love' features Phil Collins on his well-battered tambourine.

Next up is a blues band with Clapton, Buddy Guy and Robert Cray on guitars. They romp through 'Watch Yourself' and take a slow and sultry route on 'Have You Ever Loved A Woman,' 'Worried Life Blues' and 'Hoodoo Man'.

The nine-piece band has guitarist Phil Palmer alongside Clapton and they stomp through the Jerry Lynn Williams number 'Pretending', which has a feisty guitar duel as Ferrone slogs out a solid backbeat. 'Bad Love' sets up a hypnotic pulse, followed by the emotional rainstorm of 'Old Love', Eric's lament about his long relationship with Pattie Boyd.

A haunting 'Wonderful Tonight' and solemn 'Bell Bottom Blues' leads towards the sound of a full orchestra as Clapton bows out the concert with the chilling 'Edge Of Darkness' TV theme.

UNPLUGGED (REPRISE) 1992

Refreshing is hardly adequate to describe the impact of the simple but truly wonderful concept of unplugging amplifiers and playing guitars acoustically. It is a tradition of folk music of course, but MTV's "Unplugged" concept was a welcome innovation in rock. When Clapton took up the challenge of the popular series, the results were magical.

The show was filmed on January 16, 1992 and the 15-track album includes a delicate 'Tears In Heaven' as well as a lilting reworking of 'Layla', which became a smash hit single in its new guise. From 'Running On Faith' to 'Old Love' and 'Rollin' And Tumblin', every performance has the warm intimacy of a camp fire sing song. Eric thought *Unplugged* would be a flop. It sold 10 million copies, was a Number 1 US album, earned six Grammy Awards and was hailed as one of Clapton's best albums.

LEFT Eric Clapton posing outside the Royal Albert Hall in 1994. Between 1987 and 1996, he performed a run of concerts at the London venue every year.

BELOW By 2013, Clapton had played at the Albert Hall a total of 194 times (178 as a solo artist) and has decribed it as "like walking into my front room". Here, he performs at the venue in the early 1990s.

OPPOSITE Not one to travel light, Clapton poses with a selection of the guitars he takes and uses on tour.

FROM THE CRADLE (REPRISE) 1994

Clapton digs back into the roots of the traditional blues that sparked his love of the music as a young man. Recorded live in a London studio these cover performances benefit from all of Eric's past experience and growth as a sophisticated guitar player and are uplifted by the sheer power of modern rock.

On opening cut, Elmore James' 'Blues Before Sunrise', Clapton's gritty vocals display unusual aggression. A gripping 'Third Degree', by Willie Dixon, has the line "Bad luck is killing me..." spat out as Eric's fingers skitter with nervous fury around strings and frets. It is a sensational performance amid an array of delights such as the gentle shuffle of 'Reconsider Baby', the howling 'Blues Leave Me Alone' and lively dance that is 'Motherless Child'. It was Eric's first all-blues album and its success encouraged him to produce more in the same vein.

PILGRIM (REPRISE) 1998

A pilgrim is a man who undertakes a journey or long search for exalted or sentimental reasons. "How did I get here, what have I done?" sings Eric as he examines his life and soul on 'My Father's Eyes', a beautiful song reflecting on the mysteries of his childhood. Clapton describes himself as: "Just a toe rag on the run" as he embarks on his own musical pilgrimage and sings of the father he never knew.

Most affecting of all Clapton's lyrics, it is a milestone in his career. Another important song on Eric's 13th studio album is 'Circus' about the last time he saw his son Conor. Sadness permeates nearly all the album's songs, as was Clapton's intention, notably on the heart-breaking 'River Of Tears'. The title track shows a willingness to use synthesizers and drum machines, as Clapton moves into contemporary R&B.

GOLDEN YEARS
THE NEW CENTURY

As Eric Clapton entered his sixth decade as a musician, he had travelled a long and winding road that would have astonished even the blues heroes who were his own childhood inspiration. He may not have suffered the deprivations and poverty of the early pioneers, but he had been on an emotional roller coaster, worked immensely hard and in the process added his own extraordinary chapters to a rich musical history.

His enduring devotion to the blues helped ensure a wider audience and respect for the legacy of honoured artists from Robert Johnson to B.B. King. The rich, expressive sound of Clapton's guitar and the personal appeal of hit songs sung over so many years endeared him to fans and fellow artists around the world in a way that remains heart-warming and unique.

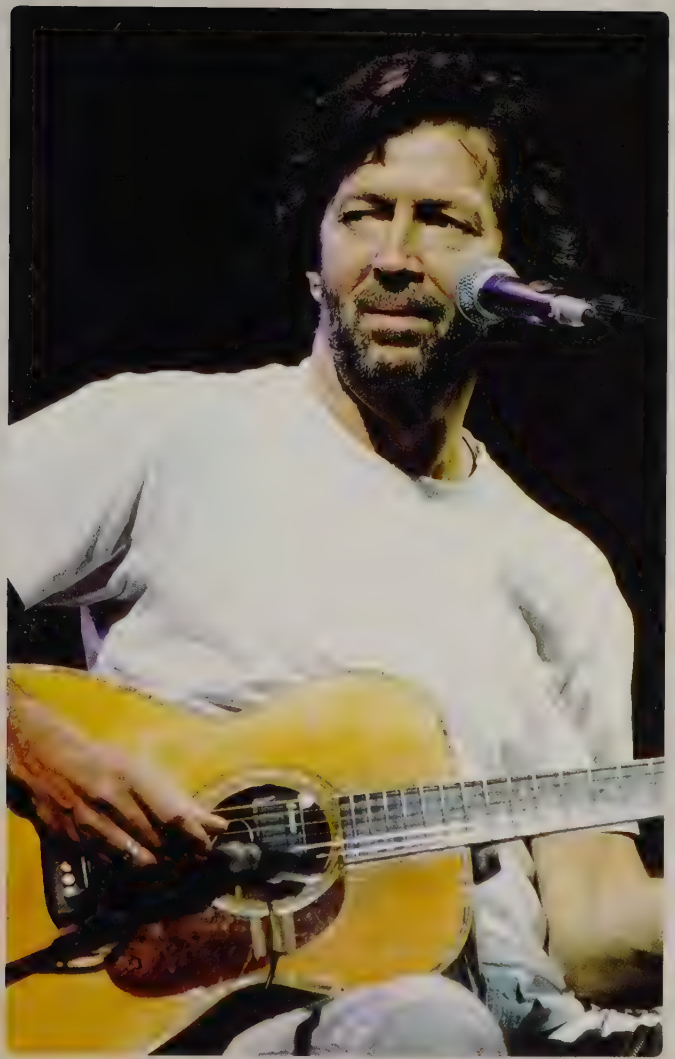
The first decade of the twenty-first century saw Eric Clapton find increased happiness and satisfaction both in his personal life and as a musician. It was a time when smiles and laughter returned to an essentially good-humoured, fun-loving and charming man. He set about reviving old friendships and past collaborations and enjoyed settling down to family life. Yet domestic bliss did not stop him working, if anything, harder than ever, with a whirlwind of tours and guest appearances as the global demand for Clapton's presence seemed insatiable.

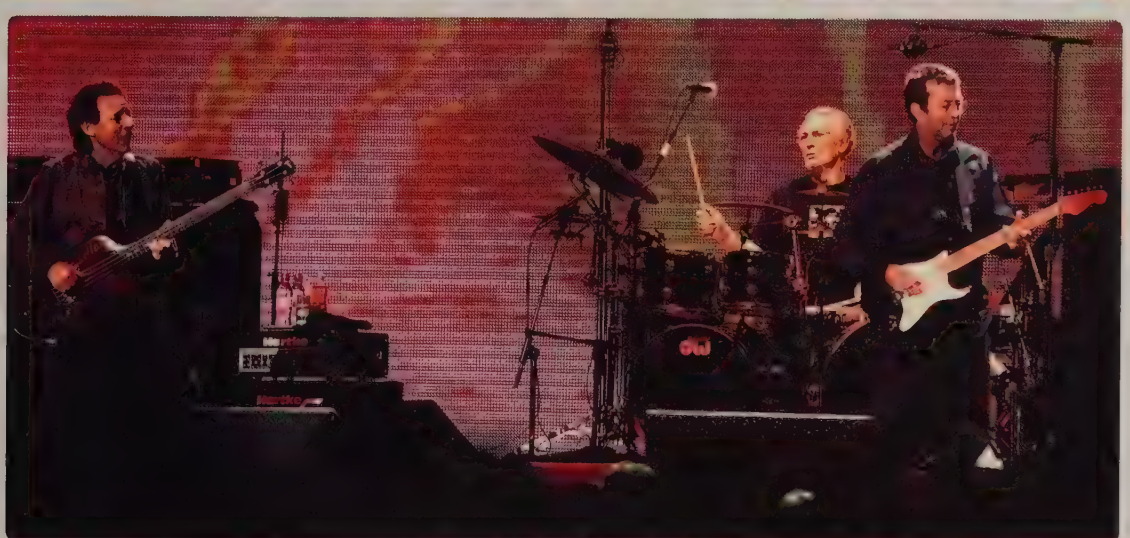
In 1998 Eric had met graphic designer Melia McEnery at an after-show party in Columbus, Ohio. They began dating and eventually married on January 1, 2002 in a church at Clapton's birthplace in Ripley, Surrey. They now have three daughters, Julie Rose, Ella May and Sophie Bell. Eric would have to get used to sleepless nights with the birth of a young family but retained sufficient energy to maintain a busy recording schedule and combine domesticity with a life on the road he could never give up.

The Millennium began for Eric in June 2000 with the release of *Riding With The King* (Reprise/Warner Bros), a collaboration with old friend B.B. King and an especially important album for Clapton. They had first met in New York in 1967 when Clapton was 22 years old, arriving in the big city with Cream. It was a magical encounter for Clapton when the two men performed together at the Café Au Go Go. Ever since that night, he had hoped they might record together. By the time they entered a studio to make *Riding With The King,* Eric was 55 and B.B was 74. King was generous in his praise for his Eric and wrote in the album's liner notes: "I'd like to thank Eric Clapton for enabling me to fulfil a lifelong dream. Working with a true genius has been an inspiration and pure joy! I feel blessed to have such camaraderie in a field that I love so much." Clapton responded: "Finally we got a chance to go into a studio together... something we have been talking about for a very long time and that I have been dreaming about all my life. B.B. is my hero. Always has been."

The joint album drew enthusiastic reviews, topped the charts and won a Grammy Award in 2000.

But there were always more solo projects to keep Clapton busy. Next came *Reptile* (Reprise/Warner Bros) in 2001, complete with a childhood picture of Clapton on the cover. In November 2002 Eric released the live album *One More Car, One More Rider* (Reprise/Warner Bros), recorded during his 2001 tour. Then Eric's respect for his blues heroes was reaffirmed with *Me And Mr. Johnson* and Sessions For Robert J. (Reprise/Warner Bros), both available in 2004.





OPPOSITE Despite beginning his fifth decade as a professional musician, Clapton continues to tour and play all over the world.

ABOVE LEFT A relaxed-looking Clapton plays an accoustic set in Italy, 2001.

ABOVE Clapton performing at Buckingham Palace in 2002 to mark HM the Queen's Golden Jubilee.

LEFT The decade saw Cream reform for a number of reunion concerts at the Royal Albert Hall and Madison Square Garden. Clapton would later admit that he had become more "generous" with regard to his past.

The onset of middle age meant Eric had to cope with the loss of more old friends, none more painful than the passing of George Harrison, who died from lung cancer on November 29, 2001. Exactly a year later Clapton performed at a poignant memorial concert for Harrison, which he directed, at the Royal Albert Hall with guests Ravi Shankar, Sir Paul McCartney and Ringo Starr.

In 2003 Eric confessed he was now feeling "generous towards my past" having once preferred to forget the stress and turmoil that such memories often aroused. He took part in the first of several reunion events, the first one with his old Bluesbreakers boss, John Mayall. To celebrate Mayall's 70th birthday, Clapton joined John, guitarist Mick Taylor and trombonist/bandleader Chris Barber at a fundraising show for Unicef held on July 19 at the King Dock Arena, Liverpool.

Then came a right royal occasion that would have astounded the beatnik, hobo Clapton of 1963. On November 3, 2004 Clapton received a CBE that had been awarded in the 2004 New Year's Honours List. It was presented by Princess Anne at Buckingham Palace. This added to the OBE he had already received in 1994, awarded by the Queen for his "contribution to British life". On March 1, 2005 Eric met the Queen again, this time in the company of guitar royalty – Jeff Beck, Jimmy Page and Brian May – when they attended a reception held during a special "Music Day At The Palace".

In January 2005 Eric played at a Tsunami Relief Concert in Cardiff. But the most unexpected and exciting event of the year was the announcement that the Sixties' supergroup Cream was to be reunited. Eric would play concerts with his old colleagues Peter "Ginger" Baker and Jack Bruce for the first time since their farewell in 1968. Ginger had fallen on hard times and Jack had recently undergone a liver transplant. The idea grew during 2004 that it would be a good time to revive the trio and recapture some of their old spirit.

After some intensive rehearsals, Cream performed for four nights at the Royal Albert Hall, London in May 2005, the scene of their last UK concerts in November 1968. They played with great joy and renewed enthusiasm, even though Clapton contracted a virus infection the night before the first show.

Standing ovations were repeated when Cream played at Madison Square Garden in October. The sound of 'White Room' and 'Sunshine Of Your Love' enthralled New York rock fans and celebrities in the audience. It was hoped Cream would respond to demands for a full US tour. Sadly, the idea had to be abandoned when Baker and Bruce fell out. "It was just like the Sixties all over again," Clapton laughed ruefully later.

Back Home (Reprise/Warner Bros), was released in August 2005, Eric's first album with new material since 2001. It featured the song 'So Tired', about his lack of sleep while coping with newborn babies and a version of George Harrison's 'Love Comes To Everyone.'

In November 2006 a 14-track CD with guitarist J.J. Cale called *The Road To Escondido* (Reprise/Warner Bros), featured Clapton, Cale, Billy Preston and Derek Trucks, a young American slide guitarist prodigy. The Derek Trucks Band was later invited to be the opening act for Eric Clapton at the 2007 Crossroads Guitar Festival.

Having set a trend by reviving Cream, a decision that encouraged other classic groups like Led Zeppelin and the Police to get back together, Eric next teamed up with his former Blind Faith pal Steve Winwood. They united in the right kind of musical setting they'd talked about for years, and performed for three nights at Madison Square Garden in February 2008.

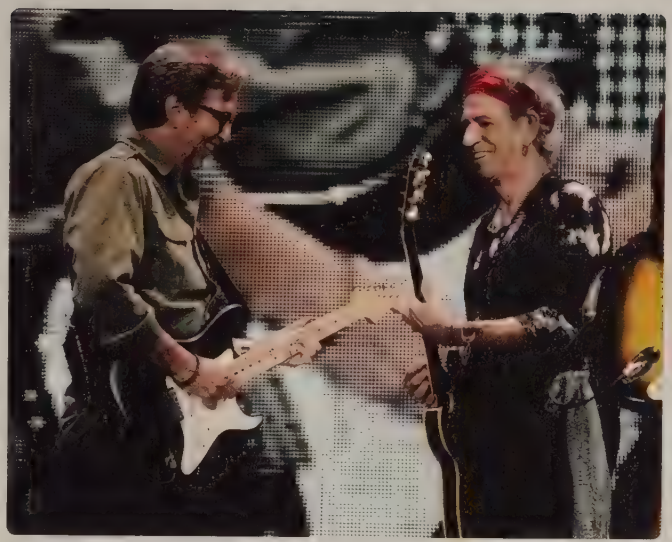
This was followed by a 14-date US tour in 2009, climaxing with a show at the Hollywood Bowl in June. Steve and Eric performed songs from the original *Blind Faith* album, including 'Presence Of The Lord', 'Had To Cry Today' and 'Can't Find My Way Home', as well as numbers from their solo careers such as 'After Midnight', 'Dear Mr. Fantasy' and Hendrix's 'Little Wing'. Clapton and Winwood also toured the UK and Europe during 2010, and in May and June 2011 the pair got together again to play five sold out concerts at the Royal Albert Hall.

In another long overdue combination of talents, Jeff Beck and Eric Clapton blasted away for two nights at London's 02 Arena on February 13 and 14, 2010. The former Yardbirds (who had never played together in the old group), went on to complete more historic dates in the US and Canada, which included a performance at the 2010 Crossroads Guitar Festival at Toyota Park, Bridgeview, Illinois on June 26. During the finale of the festival a remarkable line-up of eight guitarists jammed with Eric: Derek Trucks, Warren Haynes, James Burton, Jimmie Vaughan, Susan Tedeschi, Keb Mo, Buddy Guy and Johnny Winter.

The Eric Clapton Band also embarked on an arduous Spring tour, climaxing with six nights at the Royal Albert Hall in May. In September 2010 a new studio album, *Clapton* (Reprise), featured a haunting vocal treatment of 'Autumn Leaves' by Eric, one of a selection of his favourite popular standards.

"WHEN I'M 70, I'LL STOP. I WON'T STOP PLAYING OR DOING ONE-OFFS, BUT I'LL STOP TOURING, I THINK." ERIC CLAPTON

2011 was another busy year when Eric's band included the legendary Steve Gadd on drums with Willie Weeks (bass) and Chris Stainton (keyboards). Concerts were played in South America in October and Clapton toured Japan with Steve Winwood in November and December.



On November 29, 2012 Eric Clapton played onstage at the 02 Arena in London with the Rolling Stones during the second of the band's five shows that celebrated their 50th anniversary, jamming on the Muddy Waters' number 'Champagne And Reefer'. From the 02 it was back to Madison Square Garden on December 12 to perform at a special concert for the Hurricane Sandy Relief Fund.

Still showing absolutely no sign of wanting to retire or give up singing and playing his beloved guitars, Eric Clapton set about celebrating his own 50th anniversary as a professional musician by announcing a series of concerts to be held in the US, UK and Europe in March and June 2013. On March 12 he released his latest album, *Old Sock* (Surfdog Records).

During his career Eric Clapton had lived through the many stages of rock; first as reluctant hero, then as the confident performer in charge of his instrument and his destiny. He deserved all the accolades and success. The quiet smile when audiences cheered one more time told its own story. He was glad and grateful.

OPPOSITE A portrait of Eric Clapton taken in 2003. Demonstrating remarkable resilience, he has achieved chart success in all decades of his musical career.

ABOVE Eric "Slowhand" Clapton jamming with his old friend Keith Richards at the Rolling Stones' 02 Arena show in 2012.

FAR LEFT Clapton in action at the Albert Hall. In 2000, he was inducted into the Rock and Rock Hall of Fame as a solo artist.

LEFT Eric Clapton proudly shows off his CBE, which he received from HM the Queen in 2004.

CLAPTON'S ALBUMS

THE 2000s

A mellow Clapton could afford to experiment and indulge his own musical tastes with the confidence of a contented family man, who had done much yet still had more to give. Hence tributes to his idol Robert Johnson, collaborations with old friends B.B. King and Steve Winwood and singing favourite "standards" remembered from childhood on the retrospective *Clapton*. And in 2013 Clapton was still ready to sock it to us...

RIDING WITH THE KING (REPRISE/WARNER BROS) 2000

Clapton finally gets to work with his old idol B.B. King. The result is a set of good-time musical conversations epitomized by the title track, a John Hiatt composition, full of the sounds of laughter and companionship. The King takes centre stage singing 'Ten Long Years' while Clapton and his regular session men with Steve Gadd on drums, provide the relaxed, easy beat the senior guitarist prefers. Five vintage B.B. compositions include a restrained 'Three O'Clock Blues' and an even slower 'When My Heart Beats Like A Hammer'. Big Bill Broonzy's 'Key To The Highway' is sung alternately by Clapton and King with acoustic guitar backing and the Sam & Dave's hit 'Hold On, I'm Coming' is an extra treat.

REPTILE (REPRISE/WARNER BROS) 2001

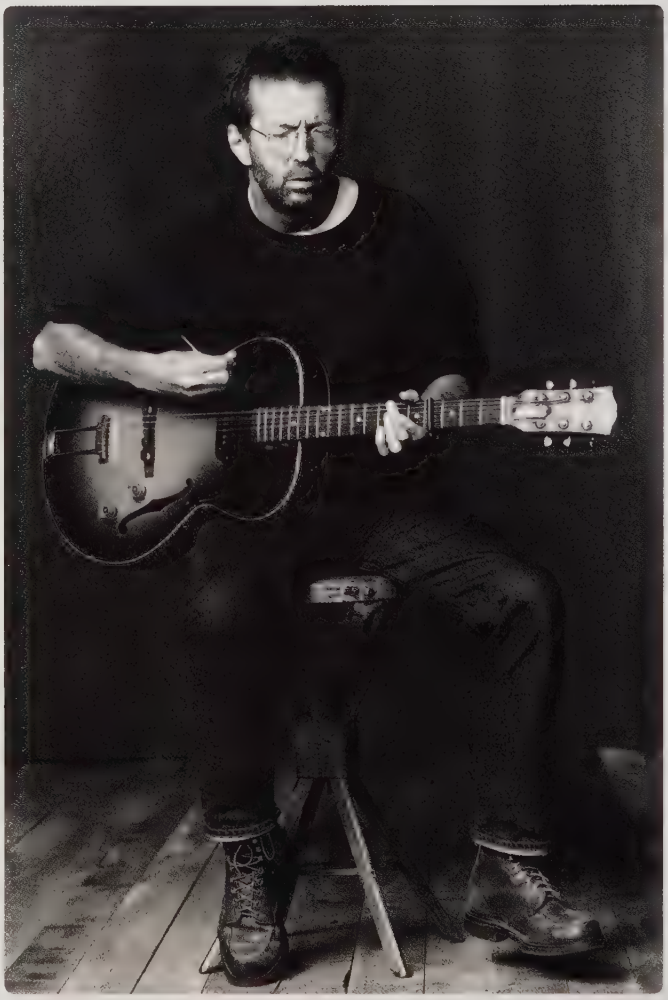
Strikingly diverse, Reptile explores different facets of Clapton's tastes and reveals an artist refusing to be constrained. His singing tackles different styles with ease, while the guitar playing reaches new heights of dexterity. The title track is a lively instrumental imbued with jazzy samba rhythms. Among the many surprises are the back beat blues 'Got You On My Mind' and 'Find Myself', a 1940s-style country swinger. Clapton's vocals on 'I Want A Little Girl' are remarkable and heavy rocker 'Superman Inside' helps cover all tastes on an album that improves with each listen.

ONE MORE CAR, ONE MORE RIDER (REPRISE/WARNER BROS) 2002

A double album set packed with live action as Clapton slips into gear with a driving 'Key To The Highway'. Some 19 classic Clapton compositions and hits are delivered with panache, from 'Reptile' to the raunchy swagger of 'Got You On My Mind'. Respectful applause greets 'Tears In Heaven' and 'Bell Bottom Blues' as the mood of sadness spills over into 'River Of Tears'. 'I Want A Little Girl' has echoes of Ray Charles, while Clapton fans of all ages are catered for with 'Badge', 'Cocaine' and 'Layla'. Eric delves into pure nostalgia when he sings 'Over The Rainbow.'

ME AND MR. JOHNSON (REPRISE/WARNER BROS) 2004

Robert Johnson was born in Mississippi, USA on May 8, 1891 and died on August 16, 1938. During his short life he evolved the music that would influence a range of blues artists from Muddy Waters to Elmore James, and Eric Clapton. Here is a



OPPOSITE The 2000s have seen E.C. release nine albums, some drawing on his early influences.

ABOVE B.B. King and Eric blowing the blues away, at the Apollo Theatre, New York, in 2003.

ABOVE RIGHT Eric Clapton unplugged at his Crossroads Festival, Arizona in 2013.

heartfelt tribute to the singer and guitarist who recorded most of his work in the mid-Thirties, including 'Come On In My Kitchen'. It's one of the Johnson numbers Eric performed during sessions supposedly never intended for use. He had rented a studio for another project but didn't have enough new songs ready. So Eric chose Johnson numbers to play instead, such as the jazzy 'They're Red Hot' and '32-20 Blues', a romping boogie that enlivens a happy accident of an album.

SESSIONS FOR ROBERT J. (REPRISE/WARNER BROS) 2004

Clapton's blues roots are further explored on another set of Robert Johnson compositions. On a swinging 'Sweet Home Chicago', Clapton's guitar solo brings back memories of John Mayall's Bluesbreakers during the British blues boom. Eric shares guitar duties with Doyle Bramhall II and they are backed by Billy Preston on Hammond organ and Chris Stainton (piano), with rhythm team Nathan East (bass) and Steve Gadd (drums). 'Terraplane Blues', one of Johnson's earliest recordings, is recreated with Clapton and Bramhall on acoustic guitars. The CD is accompanied by a DVD movie of the recording session.

BACK HOME (REPRISE/WARNER BROS) 2005

Clapton sings of the joys of fatherhood on 'So Tired', a chirpy commentary on what happens when a rock musician becomes a dad. Domestic themes continue with 'Say What You Will' about finding "good love", while 'Back Home' is warm and romantic as befits a happy family man. Shouting brass backs up 'Revolution' and optimism abounds in 'Love Comes To Everyone.'

LIVE FROM MADISON SQUARE GARDEN: ERIC CLAPTON AND STEVE WINWOOD (REPRISE/WARNER BROS) 2009

Two legendary performers are reunited at this historic event recorded live at Madison Square, New York in February 2008, the scene of their last performances together in Blind Faith in 1969. A huge amount of material is packed into two audio CDs while a companion twin DVD set features documentaries and bonus tracks. Chris Stainton (piano), Willie Weeks (bass) and Ian Thomas (drums) provide the solid backing while Clapton and Winwood share vocal, guitar and keyboard duties.

> "I HEARD THE SONGS I PLAYED ON *CLAPTON* LIKE 'AUTUMN LEAVES' AS A KID. I HAD BEEN SINGING THEM IN MY HEAD FOR 60 YEARS, SO I CAN SING THEM FIRST TAKE. NO PROBLEM." ERIC CLAPTON

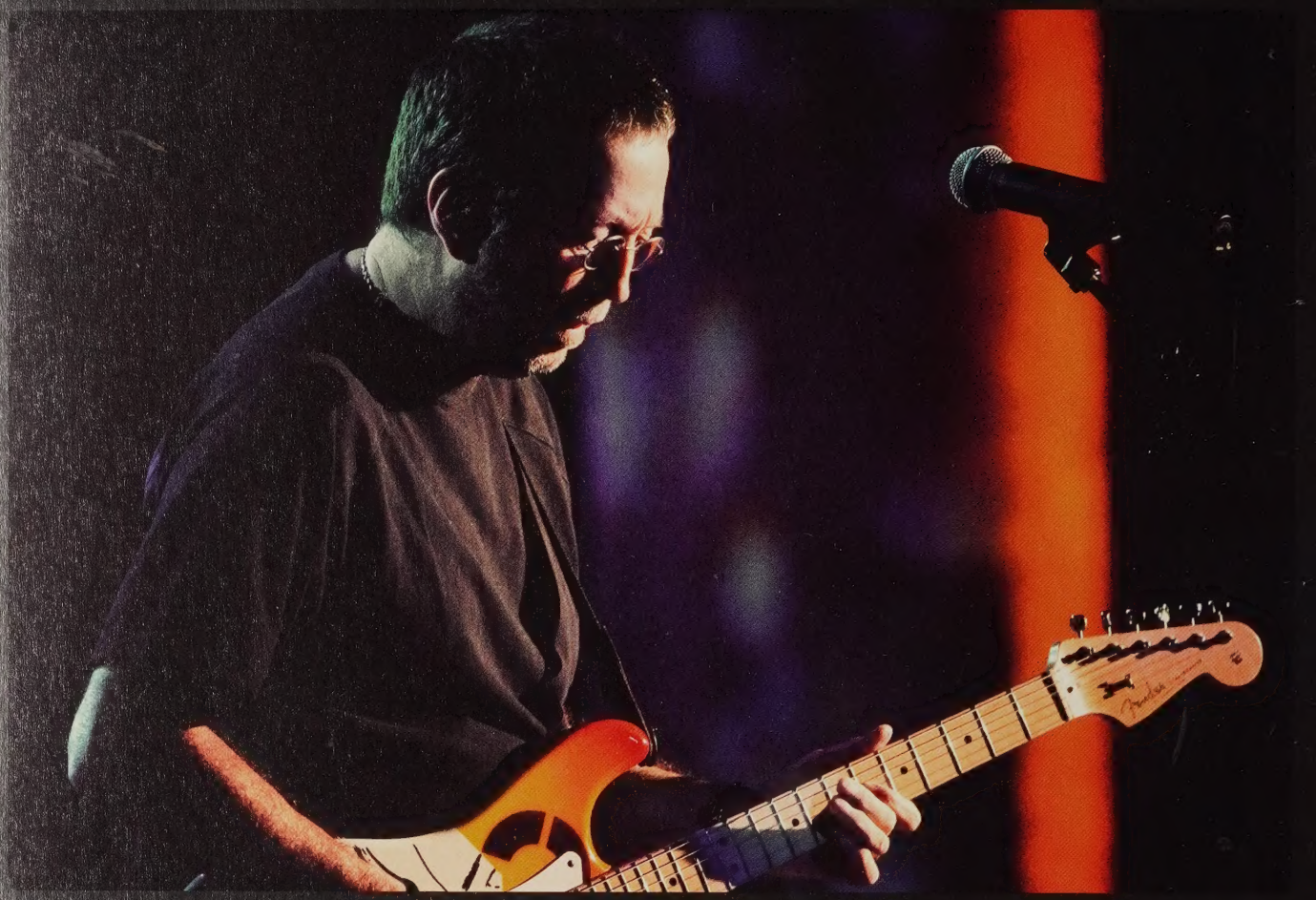
Songs from Blind Faith, Traffic and Derek and the Dominos predominate and Winwood's voice soars with all its old power on 'Had To Cry Today' and 'Georgia On My Mind'. A pounding 'Them Changes' commemorates the late drummer Buddy Miles and 'Little Wing' and 'Voodoo Chile' offer a tribute to Jimi Hendrix.

CLAPTON (REPRISE/WARNER BROS) 2010

Clapton "just let it happen" when he delved into a mix of new material and favourite old songs with this release. A mellow version of Hoagy Carmichael's 'Rockin' Chair', normally associated with Louis Armstrong, is sung by Clapton with easy charm. 'Autumn Leaves' and Irving Berlin's 'How Deep Is The Ocean' sustain the nostalgic mood while Fats Waller's 'My Very Good Friend The Milkman' has Allen Toussaint on piano and Wynton Marsalis on trumpet. A Top 10 album, *Clapton* was a big hit.

OLD SOCK (POLYDOR) 2013

Celebrating Clapton's 50th anniversary year, the quaintly titled *Old Sock* furthers the mood of nostalgia established on *Clapton*. Eric sets out to regain the innocence of childhood and his pre-rock'n'roll years by singing more of the songs he loved then and now. They include Jerome Kern's 'The Folks Who Live On The Hill,' a 1957 hit for Peggy Lee as well as Gershwin's 'Our Love Is Here To Stay' and old 1930s favourite 'All Of Me.' Guest artists Taj Mahal, JJ Cale, Chaka Khan, Sir Paul McCartney and Steve Winwood all contribute to Eric's 21st studio album made as he contemplates the onset of the age of retirement.



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ENCLOSURE

ITEM 21

A Derek and the Dominos poster from 1970. The band released their only album, *Layla and Other Assorted Love Songs*, in the same year.

OPPOSITE Eric Clapton performing at the 2002 BET Walk of Fame show in honour of Stevie Wonder.